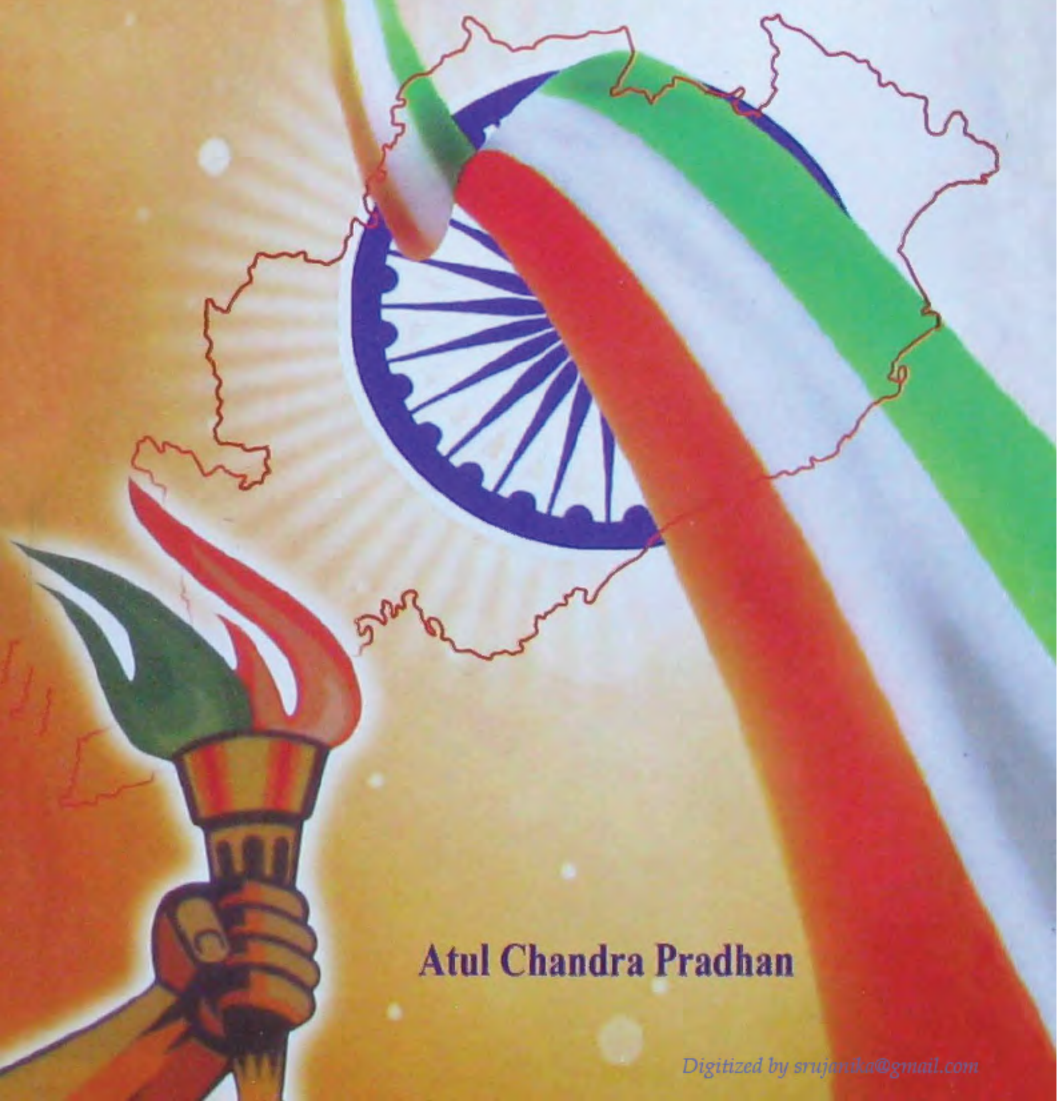
Sidelights on Freedom Struggle in Orissa



Atul Chandra Pradhan

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Preface

Freedom's battles are not fought without paying heavy prices. Just as man would not cherish the thought of living in a body other than his own, so nations do not like to live under other nations, however noble and great the latter may be.

– Mahatma Gandhi

Freedom struggle in India which is a unique phenomenon in the history of modern world has been a major field of investigation for historians and social scientists after independence. In the course of research some distinct trends in the historiography of freedom struggle have come out. First, in stead of viewing freedom struggle simply as an encounter between the colonial masters and the Indian people, attempts have been made to study its character in different regions and impact of local milieu, people and leadership on its course. Secondly, the insurrections and agitations outside and before the Congress- led nationalist movement have been re-assessed; in stead of treating them as mere disturbances or resistances devoid of ideological underpinnings the scholars have viewed them as anti-alien and anti-colonial movements for liberation. Thirdly, the differential impact of the freedom struggle on the cross sections of the population, particularly the subalterns like peasants, workers, women, tribals and untouchables and their roles have been investigated.

The articles published in this volume reflect the above trends in the historiography of freedom struggle in Orissa. Orissa has a rich record of insurrections in pre-nationalist era. She also joined the national mainstream in the era of Congress and Gandhi. In the first article I have tried to map out the historiography of freedom struggle in Orissa from the inception of British rule up to independence. Orissa became a separate state in 1936 as a result of a prolonged constitutional agitation, called the Oriya movement

which ran parallel to the nationalist movement and influenced the latter. While the nationalist movement was going on in British-ruled territories, in the adjacent Oriya- speaking princely states, called *Garjats* people carried on movements for civic and democratic rights, which ultimately got merged in the nationalist movement and prepared the ground for the accession of the princely states to the Indian Dominion and their merger in the Orissa province after independence.

While, in the universities of Orissa and outside, the scholars have earned Ph.D.s by studying freedom movement of Orissa in different localities, phases and aspects, the Government of Orissa have twice brought out comprehensive volumes on freedom struggle; in 1957-9 History of Freedom Movement in Orissa was brought out in five volumes under the general editorship of H K Mahtab, the then Chief Minister, and in 2004-2006 the Department of Culture, Government of Orissa has published a two-volume history (*Freedom Struggle in Orissa*), embodying the findings of latest research. This volume, though not a comprehensive treatment of freedom struggle in Orissa, deals with certain significant aspects of this struggle. The scholars and general readers may benefit from a work of this character.

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The articles published in this volume have been published earlier in some journals and books or presented in some seminars. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the earlier publishers ——

the Information and Public Relation Department, Government of Orissa for publishing "Historigraphy of Freedom Movement in Orissa" (*Orissa Review*, August 2009). "The Murder of an English Political Agent; the Study of a Violent Aberration in Nationalist Movement" (*Orissa Review*, August 2003), "Freedom Movement in Jajpur District" (*Orissa Review*, August 2006), "Freedom Movement in Khurda" (*Orissa Review*, August 2007), Centre of Advanced Studies in History and Culture, Bhubaneswar for publishing "The Keonjhar insurrection, 1891" in B.C. Ray (ed.) *New Light on History and Culture of Orissa*, Bhubaneswar, 2004 Post graduate Department of History, Utkal University for publishing "Nationalist Movement in Bhadrak District (1914-39)" in *Utkal Historical Research Journal*, Vol. V, 1994 and "Pandit Gopabandhu Das- the Man and His Role in the Public Life of Orissa" in *Utkal Historical Research Journal*, Vol. XI, 1998, the Institute of Historical studies, Calcutta for publishing "The Civil Disobedience Movement in Orissa: the Participation and Awakening of Women" in *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Vol. XXXII, 1993, Orissa History Congress for publishing "Harijan Movement in Orissa '(1932-34)" in *The Journal of Orissan History*, Vol. II July 1981, No.2, "Peoples Movement in Nilgiri in the Context of the Indian Nationalist Movement" in *The Journal of Orissan History*. Vol. V,

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No.1, 1983 and "Dhenkanal Movement, 1938" in *The Journal of Orissan History*, Vol.XIX, December 2006, and Centre of Advanced studies in History and Culture, Bhubaneswar for publishing "The Kanika Tenants' Agitation (1921-22)" in its publication, *The Journal of Historical and Social Analysis*, Vol.III, July-December 1990 NO.5.

The article, entitled "Freedom Movement in Jagatsinghpur District" was presented in a seminar held under the auspices of History Department, SVS Mahavidyalaya, Jagatsinghpur on 8 March 2009.

-Author

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I

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN ORISSA

In the post-independence India freedom struggle which was a forbidden subject for academics in colonial period has become an important area of research and study. Freedom movement has been studied at three levels-nation, province and locality and the history of the anti-colonial mobilization has been broadly divided into two phases- the prenationalist and nationalist; the nationalist phase which began with the foundation of Indian National Congress has been divided into pre-Gandhian and Gandhian phases.

In pre-nationalist era, with the exception of the revolt of 1857, the anti-colonial uprisings were local in character. In the first century of British rule it is said that, there were forty major local uprisings and many minor ones. These uprisings were initially organized by dispossessed princes and landlords and afterwards by the tribals and peasants. The latter rebellions were caused by the harsh administrative rules and regulations and economic exploitation by landlords, merchants and money- lenders. In Orissa during the first century of British rule there were intermittent rebellions in four places- Paralakhemundi (from 1768 to 1856), Ghumsur (There were rebellions in two phases; in the first phase (1836-1846) the rebellion was led by the Kandha leader Kamal Lochan Dora Bisoyi and in the second phase (1846-1856) it was led by his nephew Chakra Bisoyi), Khurda (1805-1817, 1827 and 1836) and Sambalpur (The rebellious activities were carried on by Surendra Sai from 1857 to 1864 i.e. till his imprisonment). Besides these direct challenges to the colonial power, there were rebellions in princely states in which the paramount power had to intervene. The British land revenue policy i.e. exorbitant increase in revenue demand was the crucial factor behind these rebellions. The Tribals (Sabars in

Paralakhemundi, Kandhas in Ghumsur and Khurda and Gonds in Sambalpur) played important roles in all these rebellions. These rebellions, generally called resistance movements wore marked by anti-alion antagonism and individual acts of heroism and patriotism. About Bakshi Jagabandhu's rebellion in Khurda in 1817 W. Ker, an English official observed.: "Jagabandhu has given a lead in organizing a movement, no matter in how haphazard manner for ousting the newly established English from Orissa, he expected that other people who also hit hard by the maladministration under the English and the Orissa chiefs who had been deprived of all their freedom would follow up the lead to make a common cause with him for the purpose of liberating their motherland from foreign yoke."[1]

In the second half of the nineteenth century regional as well as national identity consciousness grew among the newly emerging intelligentsia in different parts of the country. Although nationalism emerged as an all- India phenomenon aiming at the unification of all sections of population in a common platform, yet the character of nationalism in every part of the country was influenced by regional identity consciousness and local issues. In Orissa regional identity consciousness preceded and parallelled the growth of nationalist movement, because Oriya-speaking tracts lay scattered in three provinces- Bengal, Madras and Central Provinces and being a minority in each of these provinces the Oriyas found their identity threatened by the dominant majority groups. Another important local factor was the existence of *Garhjats* i.e. the Oriya-speaking princely states, enjoying autonomy in internal administration, which were under the control of the commissioner of Orissa Division till 1922. As popular unrest grew against the misrule of the princely rulers, it got linked up with the nationalist movement in the directly ruled British territory, which was called *Mughalbandi*.

In view of the peculiarity of the Orissan situation the nationalist theory that there was a central contradiction between the British rule and Indian people irrespective of distinctions of class and status

which accounted for the growth of ant-colonial movement does not hold good in case of Orissa, as for many years the Oriya elite and intelligentsia tried to achieve the goal of amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts through collaboration with the British authorities. Being a loof from centres of power in colonial India- Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, the Oriya elite and intelligentsia wanted to create a centre of power for themselves through the creation of the province of Orissa. In a relative sense because of proximity to Bengal, direct railway link with Calcutta and cultural link and affinity, Bengal renaissance and growth of nationalism in Bengal exercised considerable influence on the growth of nationalism in Orissa. Some celebrities of Bengal likeAcharya Prafulla Chandra Ray and Satish Chandra Dasgupta were associated with freedom movement in Orissa. Swadeshi movement had its impact on Orissa. During the Civil Disobedience movement the Congress volunteers were coming from Midnapore to assist and encourage their counterparts in the Balasore district.

Inspite of the pan-Oriya identity consciousness and the growing feeling of Oriya irredenta the foundation of Indian National Congress had an enthusiastic response from the emerging Oriya intelligentsia. On 3 March 1886, a public meeting held in the building of Cuttack Printing Company approved the resolutions, passed in the first session of Congress. After returning from the Madras session of Congress, held in 1887 Madhusudan Das, one of the Oriya leaders who used to attend Congress sessions in the early phase told the audience at Cuttack; "The people of Orissa should work for the country's good side by side with their willingness to improve the administrative, cultural and linguistic conditions of Orissa. Narrow racialism and provincialism should be forgotton for the benefit of the whole of India which constitutes the motherland"[2]. In the early phase of Congress the Utkal Sabha of Cuttack, the National Society of Balasore and Utkal Hitaishini Sabha of Paralakhemundi used to send their delegates to its annual sessions.

Towards the end of December 1903 Madhusudan Das organized Utkal Sammilani at Cuttack to carry forward the movement for the merger of Oriya-speaking tracts. It is held by some that having failed to raise the amalgamation question in Indian National Congress. Madhusudan steered an independent path, and sought to achieve the amalgamation in collaboration with the British authorities. Early in December 1903, Lord Curzon's Government had circulated a plan among the Governments of Central Provinces, Madras and Bengal which envisaged partition of Bengal, creation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and merger of the Oriya-speaking tracts of Bengal, Madras and Central provinces. This plan which was disapproved in the Congress session held in Madras in December, 1903 was heartily welcomed in the first session of Utkal Sammilani. Whatever might be the plans of British Government and Madhusudan's rapport with the authorities, from popular perspective the formation of Utkal Sammilani was the natural culmination of the growing Oriya identity consciousness among the Oriyas scattered in three provinces.

The Utkal Sammilani has been criticized on several grounds. The detractors have called it loyalistic as it sought to achieve its goal through petition and prayer; they have called it parochial as its jurisdiction was confined to Orissa; some have held that initially the Utkal Samilani was directed against the non-Oriya intermediaries between the Government and the Oriyas. The British historian Judith M Brown says that the Oriyas wanted " a separate Oriya province where the local vernacular speakers would be free of these foreign Indian administrators who were intermediaries between them and the British."[3] It is alleged that the Utkal Sammilani was dominated by Rajas and zamindars against whom Congressmen had to fight later though elections and agitational activities. During the first 17 years of its existence (1903-1920) the Utkal Sammilani held sixteen annual sessions out of which eleven were chaired by Rajas and zamindars, and five by middle class gentlemen. During the next 26 years (1921-1947) there were seventeen annual sessions out of

which 14 were chaired by middle class gentlemen and three by zamindars. Madhusudan Das intended Utkal Sammilani to be a national body in a regional setting. He observed in its second session: "In this conferences representatives of various nationalities, such as Oriyas, Bengalis, Telgus, Rajputs and Marwaris are present. If this is not to be treated as an all-India body Congress can not be called an all India body."[4] As reported in *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, in this session the princes, zamindars, gentry and poor and people of different communities such as Hindus, Muhammedans and Christians were present.[5] Though dominated by the Rajas and zamindars, the Utkal Sammilani was not devoid of popular base. The princes and zamindars were bound up with the common people by the ties of language, religion and social custom. Some attempts were also made through emissaries to organize the branches of the Sammilani at grass root level. In certain areas of southern Orissa the Utkal Sammilani sessions roused popular enthusiasm.

Though a regional organization Utkal Sammilani was national in outlook. Every session of Utkal Sammilani began with the singing of a nationalist Sanskrit song, titled "Bharat Gitika", composed by the poet Radhanath Ray. The Sammilani aimed at building a united and prosperous Orissa as an integral part of India. Madhusudan held that a strong Orissa would contribute to the strength of India as a whole. In the fifth session of Utkal Union Conference, held at Puri in 1908, he pointed out; "There is no difference between mother Utkal and mother India. If there is pain any limb of the body, that limb has to be treated. That treatment would strengthen the whole body. The purpose of treatment of Utkal is India's amelioration"[6]. Aware of the multi-national character of the Indian polity, comparable to Europe, he endeavored to build Orissa as a strong constituent unit. Having the same consideration in view, though critical of Madhusudan's methods of prayer and petition. Aurobindo Ghose, the extremist leader appreciated Madhusudan's goals. He held "that Orissa is beginning to feel its separate consciousness and to attempt to grow into an organized life under a capable and high-spirited

leader" and that backward provinces like backward communities should awake and "must take their place in the advancing surge of Indian political life" and "must prepare themselves for a high rank in the future federated strength of India"[7].

Utkal Sammilani created a new socio-political consciousness; it roused the dormant public spirit of the people of Orissa. It acted as a spring board for some who later on joined the Gandhian nationalist movement. From the forum of the Utkal Sammilani Gopabandhu Das emerged as the organizer of Gandhian Congress in 1920. In the fourteenth session of the Utkal Sammilani, held at Cuttack in April 1919 he observed in his presidential speech:"Associating our aspirations with Indian aspirations we should devotee ourselves to the best of our ability to welfare of the whole Indian nation."[8] At his instance in the sixteenth session of the Utkal Sammilani, held at Chakradharpur immediately after the Nagpur session of Indian National Congress, a resolution was passed supporting and accepting the objectives of the National Congress. In terms of practical gain, because of the Utkal Sammilani, Orissa's identity was recognized in Indian National Congress and Indian body politic. The Utkal Sammilani continued to maintain its separate existence in spite of having accepted the goals of Congress at Chakradharpur under certain compulsion.

After the First World War, as there was an upsurge of nationalist feelings all over the country because of anti-Rowlatt bill agitation and Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, young elements in Orissa became disenchanted with the Utkal Sammilani's methods of constitutional agitation and felt it improper to remain aloof from the national mainstream. At this stage Gopabandhu emerged as the leader of Congress movement in Orissa. He became the first president of Utkal Provincial Congress Committees, whose formation had been sanctioned by the Nagpur session of National Congress, 1920 in 1921. He held that by joining Congress the Oriya would be able to achieve two goals through its agitational programme and methods-

Deshamishran (amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts) and *Swaraj prapti* (freedom from foreign rule) and that these goals could not be achieved through the Sammilani's methods of petition and prayer. As an idealist Gopabandhu felt that Orissa should sacrifice her interest for the cause of the nationalist movement:

"It may be that Orissa may lose her identity altogether as a result of the national movement and we must be prepared for it. If obliteration of Orissa can save Indian nationalism, is it not desirable? It will rather be a stroke of good fortune for Orissa. People may not appreciate this sacrifice of Orissa. Still Dadhichi's sacrifice remains very noble".[9]

The staunch Utkal Unionists however continued to adhere to their method of collaboration with British authorities. They placed their demand for the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts before the Indian Statutory Commission, for which they were stigmatized in the Congress circles as Jayachandras and Mirjafars.[10] But the Orissa Congressmen who raised the amalgamation question in the forum of All-parties Conference and Congress did not get proper consideration of their case. Subhas Chandra Bose, the young Congress leader who was a domiciled resident of Orissa raised the Orissa question in the All-parties conference. The All-parties conference made the following observation on the Orissa question in its report: "We have also received a small book giving the case for Utkal, but we regret we have been unable to consider it in the absence of any special memorandum or representation. Our colleague Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose is however satisfied that the Oriya-speaking areas should be amalgamated and constituted into a separate province if this is financially possible"[11]. In the forty-third session of the Indian National Congress, held at Calcutta in December 1928, where Niranjan Pattnaik, the Congressman from Ganjam stood up to raise the Orissa question in the subject committee, the Congress President Motilal Nehru did not allow him to do so. In protest the Oriya members left the meeting. They brought

out a procession of Oriyas in Calcutta, and held a meeting at Deshabandhu nagar on 1 January 1929. A feeling of helplessness arose among the Oriyas. The *Utkal Dipika*, the moderate newspaper wrote on this occasion; "The Oriyas can not ameliorate their condition either by appealing to the Government or by denouncing the Government as the supporters of Congress. As long as they have not been able to stand on their own feet. wherever they go, they would only face humiliation."[12]

The Gandhian movement in Orissa as elsewhere envisaged implementation of a constructive programme which included promotion of *Khadar*, national education and removal of untouchability, and mass mobilization on issues like boycott of British goods and manufacture of contraband salt. So far as council boycott was concerned, though initially it was an important item of Gandhian movement, subsequently it was dropped under the influence of pro-changers or Swarajists. As a result Congressmen entered legislatures, and electoral politics became on integral part of the Congress movement. Initially constructive work appears to have been started with zeal. Inspite of lack of suitable and experienced workers by 30 June 1921 the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee could enroll 39,000 Congressmen, raise Rs.21,000/- for Tilak Swaraj Fund and distribute 16,000 spinning wheels.[13] National Schools were established in places like Sakhigopal, Sambalpur, Singhbhum and Jagatsinghpur. To supervise the national schools and to conduct their examinations Utkal Swarajya Shiksha Parishad (Orissa Council of National Education) was established with Gopabandhu Das as President and Nanda Kishore Das as Secretary. When the Congress leaders became involved in district board and council elections, the constructive work come to a standstill and the organization of Congress party at grass root level which had started with Non-cooperation movement became extinct.

After the Calcutta session of the Congress held in December 1928 which was attended by an "unprecedented" number of

delegates and spectators from Orissa mass mobilization was started once again. The movement for boycott of foreign cloth and wearing of *khadar* gained momentum. After the Lahore session of Congress held in December 1929, where the resolution was adopted to launch Civil Disobedience movement for the attainment of Complete Independence, the Utkal Provincial Congress committee asked the Oriya Congressmen to resign from the central and provincial legislatures and district Congress committees to make "effective arrangements" for observing 26 January 1930 as the Day of Independence. 26 January 1930 was observed as the Day of Independence in Orissa's "hamlets, villages and towns in a very befitting manner defying police and magisterial orders." In February and March 1930 thousands of people got enrolled as the members of the Congress and signed the pledge of independence. From April to June 1930 the Congress leaders organized salt *satyagraha* in four coastal districts-Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam in which thousands of villagers participated. About the participation of the villagers in the salt *satyagraha,* Pranakrushna Padhiary the Secretary of Utkal Pradesh congress committee made the following observation:

"This movement has found recruits from the masses, exclusively so to say. People from remote villages have enrolled themselves as volunteers and are giving splendid account of themselves. The apathy of the rich landed classes as well as people receiving and having received higher English education is marked.In refreshing contrast the enthusiasm of the so-called illiterate masses and the mercantile community in general is very encouraging. The sight of rustic men and women defying European officers is worth living for".[14]

Most of the people jailed during the salt *satyagraha*, nearly 3000 in number hailed from villages.

The organized participation of women urban as well as rural in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-32 was a spectacular

feature of the movement. Out of this movement emerged woman leaders like Rama Devi, Malati Devi and Sarala Devi who played important roles in the nationalist movement and public life of Orissa. 14 women delegates attended the Karachi session of the Congress held in March 1931. The participation of school students, called *vanar sena* as volunteers was another significant feature of the C.D. movement. Nilamani Pradhan made the following observation about the courage and sufferings of the Vanarsena.

"The young boys came as if they had been directed by some great and unseen power. They did wonderful work in Utkal as in other provinces; their *satyagraha* and sufferings enlisted public sympathy as nothing did; they were absolutely fearless and their fearlessness was contagious....Many boys got caning four to five times".[15]

During the second phase of Civil Disobedience Movement picketting of foreign cloth and cloth of boycotted mills (Specially Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mill), foreign sugar and kerosine of British Companies and excise goods constituted the main programme of the movement. During this phase, while the policemen became more repressive, the *satyagrahis* militantly resisted the police. In the Balasore district, at the instance of the *satyagrahis* from Midnapore, the local Congressmen interfered with the collection of revenue. Early in October 1932 the collector of Balasore reported to the commissioner that the Midnapore Congress was regularly sending volunteers to assist their counter-parts in Balasore in the mischievous practice of violent picketting.[16]

Gandhian constructive work and organized peasant movement were two important developments after the withdrawal of Civil Disobedience movement. While during the Non-cooperation movement there was a peasant moment in Kanika Zamindarry, which was an autonomous movement supported by Congressmen from outside mainly for political reasons, as the Raja of Kanika Rajendra Narayan Bhanjadeo, a stalwart of Utkal Sammilani was an opponent

of Congress and a favourite of the Government, in 1930's peasant movement became a wide phenomenon, spearheaded by Orissa Kisan Sangha which was formed in 1935. The peasant movement aimed at the abolition of collection of illegal dues by the Zamindars and reduction of land rents and interest charged on loans. The progress of peasant movement led to zamindar-peasant conflicts and contlicts between Zamindars and Congressmen in the provincial legislative assembly election held in 1937. So far as Congress party was concerned though, initially both leftists and rightists supported the peasant movement later on there was a rift. While leftists like Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Malati Devi and Pranakrushna Padhiary wanted to develop the peasant movement as a separate force along socialist line, right wing Congress leaders such as Nilakantha Das and Harekrushna Mahtab raised objection to separate peasants' organisation. Criticizing Nilakantha Das in a peasants' meeting held on 30 April 1937 at Anakhia in Govindapur P.S Malati Devi said that if at any time a revolutionary change was to be introduced in India, the initiative must come from the peasants with hungry stomachs.[17]

According to the Government of India Act, 1935, Orissa became a separate province, consisting of six districts-Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Koraput and Sambalpur on 1 April 1936. The creation of a separate Governor's province which was a great achievement of the Utkal Unionists roused "a lot of hopes and aspirations in English-educated class." But some nationalists like H.K. Mahtab doubted the British motives behind the creation of the separate province:

"The British policy-makers are ever intent on perpetuating the division between Hindus and Muslims. For this reason Muslim-dominated Sind was constituted into a separate province and for maintaining communal balance the Hindu-dominated Orissa was made a separate province." Mahtab considered this step "harmful to the general interest of Orissa" and "attainment of freedom by the country.[18]

In the election for the provincial legislature held in January 1937 the Congress party scored a decisive victory over the parties of the Zamindars. The party position was as follows: total no of seats-60. Congress-36, Orissa Nationalist party and United party-10. Independents-10, non-elective-4. In July 1937 Bishwanath Das formed the ministry as the leader of Congress legislature party after a brief spell of non-Congress ministry headed by Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi.

After the formation of the Congress ministry by Biswanath Das, the peasants put pressure on it for the fulfillment of their demands. On 1 September 1937 all-India peasants Day was observed at Cuttack and 10000 peasants met the Prime Minister and placed their demands. Consequently Orissa Tenancy (Amendment) Act and Orissa Moneylenders' Act were passed in 1938. The Tenancy Act sought to safeguard the peasants against the Zamindars' oppression and illegal exactions. Money lenders' Act lowered the rate of interest charged by the money-lenders.

In the meantime at all-India level the states people's movement got activated. The All-India States People's Conference, while adopting attainment of fully democratic responsible government as its objective called upon the National Congress to give up their policy of non-interference towards the princely states. The Congress session, held at Haripura on 19-21 February 1938 expressed moral support to the movements for responsible governments in princely states and permitted Congressmen to render assistance to such movements in their personal capacities. Under these circumstances the movements in the princely states of Orissa gained momentum. The second session of Orissa States People's Conference was held at Cuttack on 24 June 1937 under the presidentship of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. This conference, while reiterating the earlier demands for abolition of illegal exactions like *bethi. begari*, *magan* and *rasad* asked the rulers to introduce responsible governments, grant civic rights and occupancy rights to their subjects and carry on

administration according to declared and published laws. This conference constituted a committee of inquiry to inquire into the misrule of the states. In the mean time the states people formed their associations called Praja Mandals. The inquiry committee, headed by H.K. Mahtab in its report suggested the conversion of states into zanindaries and their merger with the province of Orissa. The Praja Mandal movement got merged in the nationalist movement. An official report of 4 November 1938 thus observed.:

"A noticeable feature of most, if not all these meetings is the fact that the British Government is described as the root of the trouble. The economic condition of the states people appear to be forgotten and the whole agitation is apparently considered as part of the general struggle against the British imperialism."[19]

The Praja Mandal movement shook the morale of the princely rulers and created the base of popular support for the accession of the states to the Indian Union and their merger with the province of Orissa which was accomplished after independence through the initiative of the Premier H.K. Mahtab under the guidance of Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel, the Home Minister of India. The peasant movement in *Mughalbandi* and Prajamandal movement in princely states in both of which the socialists played leading roles prepared the ground for the organization of Praja Socialist Party and Communist Party in Orissa. After the merger of princely states the ex-rulers formed a party, called Ganatantra Parishad which held sway over the electorate in ex-state areas at least up to 1967.

On 4 November 1939 Congress ministry resigned in protest against Government's war policy. On 1 December 1940 with H.K. Mahtab as the general director the Orissa Congress started the Individual Civil Disobedience movement which was basically an anti-war movement with a constructive programme. On 5 August 1939 Subhas Chandra Bose visited Cuttack. On this occasion steps were taken to organize the Orissa branch of Forward Bloc with Dibakar Pattnaik as the President. With the support of dissident Congressmen

Maharaja of Paralakhemundi formed a coalition ministry which worked from 24 November 1941 to 29 June 1944.

During the ministry of Maharaja of Paralakhemundi at Mahatma Gandhi's call the people of Orissa participated in Quit India movement. As the leaders were arrested and jailed soon after the adoption of Quit India resolution by AICC, it was the people who carried on revolutionary activities in their own way. In certain places such as Papadahandi and Mathili (Koraput district), Nimapada (Puri district) Bhandaripokhari, Dhamnagar, Khaira, Lunia and Eram (Balasore district), Kaipara, Kalamatia and Jajpur (Cuttack district) there was large scale mobilization of people. In these places local Congressmen were carrying on propaganda for non-cooperation in war efforts, non-payment of tax and defiance of Government officials. The overall situation in the country was tense due to war, failure of Cripps Mission and shortage of food stuff. (The rich people were apprehensive of their food stock being looted). Meetings and processions roused a spirit of militancy and defiance among the people. In Basudevapur P.S. of the Balasore district people declared an area independent, naming it after Banchhanidhi Mahanti, the nationalist poet of the locality. The police retaliated on the defiant mob by firing. At Eram, a village in Basudevapur P.S. as a result of police firing upon a gathering of 6000 people in the Melan ground 28 persons including a woman were killed. In Koraput district Laxman Naik, the Adivasi Congressman organized an army of 200 followers. Wearing *Khadar*, carrying Congress Flags and Gandhi's portrait, while being armed with saplings, cudgels and lathis Naik's followers marched through dense forests, destroyed liquor shops on the way and attacked the Mathili police station on 21 August 1942. Policemen fired upon the insurgent people resulting in the loss of five lives. Laxman Naik was sent to gallows on 29 March 1943 on the basis of fabricated charge of killing the forest guard Ramaya.

In the provincial assembly election held in 1946 the Congress party won a more spectacular victory as compared with the election of 1937. The Congress got 47 seats (including 36 uncontested seats) while others got 9 elective seats (Muslim League-4, Communists-1 and Independents-4). Formation of second Congress Ministry against the background of peasant movements and Prajamandal movement in the princely state and transfer of power prepared the ground for radical measures like merger of princely states and abolition of Zamindary in post-independence period.

To conclude, it seems appropriate to identify the different phases in the freedom struggle in Orissa. First, as mentioned earlier, in the pre-nationalist period there were local insurrections which are generally characterised as resistance movements. Secondly, the pre-Gandhian phase of the nationalist movement in Orissa is marked by participation of Oriyas in the early sessions of Congress and formation of Utkal Sammilani in isolation from national mainstream. The Utkal Sammilani was not a separatist movement; it was a sub-nationalist movement with nationalist outlook. Madhusudan Das, the founder of Utkal Sammilani was a member of Congress in its moderate phase; he broke away from Congress and preferred to be a sub-nationalist in the interest of Orissa. No doubt he loved India, but he loved Orissa more. Thirdly, Orissa joined the national mainstream in the Gandhian era with Gopabandhu Das as the leader. Orissa played active roles in Non-cooperation movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, implementation of Gandhian constructive programme and Quit India movement. Fourthly there was a new phase in the mid-thirties which saw the formation of the separate state of Orissa and formation of Congress ministry, peasant movements in *Mughalbandi*, Prajamandal movement in princely states, the rise of a leftist group in Congress and left-right bipolarization.

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II
FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KHURDA

The historians have drawn a line of demarcation between the nationalist movement organized by the English-educated middle class which began with the foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885 and the popular insurrections of the nineteenth century which were sometimes organized by the traditional elites and sometimes by peasants and tribals, In colonial discourse the mobilizations of the latter type are generally treated as disturbances or resistance movements of certain interest groups. For example, the Revolt of 1857 was characterized in colonial parlance as a purely selfish sepoy mutiny and the Khurda rebellion of 1817 as a rebellion of dispossessed *paikas* or militia men of the deposed Raja of Khurda. Among the Indian historians sometimes we find a controversy regarding the characterization of the nineteenth popular insurrections. For example, while some scholars like S.B.Chaudhury treat the Revolt of 1857 as a war of independence, R.C. Mazumdar holds that "miseries and blood shed of 1857-8 were not the birth pangs of a freedom movement in India but the dying groans of an obsolete aristocracy and (the) centrifugal feudalism of medieval age" In case of the Khurda rebellion of 1817 while a section of scholars and intelligentsia consider it as the first war of independence, others call it a resistance movement. A number of questions may be raised here, while we try to understand the nature of nineteenth century insurrections-what is freedom movement? when did it begin?, whether the so-called resistance movements were anti-colonial in nature?, was the Congress movement a freedom movement from the beginning? While characterizing the Revolt of 1857 as "a primary resistance movement", Eric Stokes, the British historian recognizes

its "innate antagonism to alien overlords" and lack of "ideological underpinning". Ranjit Guha, the Subaltern historian considers insurgency as the necessary anti-thesis of colonialism. If colonial rule was exploitative and discriminatory in nature, anti-colonialism was bound to be co-eval with colonial rule, and anti-colonial or national movement was a cumulative process. Alternatively we may postulate a phase of hibernation between the popular insurrections and the rise of intelligentsia-based nationalism.

In the early phase of the British rule there were four anti-British or anti-colonial outbreaks in Khurda-the rebellion of Mukundadeva II, the Raja of Khurda in 1804,Buxi Jagabandhu's rebellion of 1817,Tapang rebellion of 1827 and Banpur rebellion of 1836,Jayi Rajguru, the principal adviser of Raja Mukundadeva II was the kingpin of the anti-British outbreak of 1804. He was most probably opposed to the Khurda Raja's alliance with the British for assisting the latter in the fight against the Marathas and at his instance the Raja's troops entered the disputed *mahals* (Lembai, Rahang,Purushottam Chhatar and Chabiskud) which the Marathas had earlier taken away from the Raja of Khurda and the British refused to restore them to the Raja in contravention of their earlier promise and plundered them. (The British also violated their promise by not paying rupees one lakh out of which Rs.40,000/-was actually paid by them to Jayi Rajaguru).The British knew Jayi Rajguru's key role in the rebellion of the Raja, for which they executed the latter and ultimatedly pardoned the Raja. Buxi Jagabandhu who had opposed Jayi Rajaguru's advice for rebellion subsequently rebelled against the British in 1817 in a different context i.e. when he found himself reduced to a pauper being deprived of his Rorang estate because of a bureaucratic conspiracy and he saw the plight of people due to overassessment, rise of salt price, depreciation of *kauri*

currency and oppression of *amlas* and *darogas*. Initially Jagabandhu and Krushnachandra Bhramarabar(the *dewan*) appear to have sought redressal of grievances through prayer and petition. As there was no favorable response from the authorities he took recourse to open rebellion. The open rebellion was suppressed within a short time. Thereafter Jagabandhu hid himself in the jungles of Khurda, Banpur abd Ghumsur and carried on underground resistance with the help of courageous *paikas* and Kandhas till 1825. The rebels committed dacoity, arson and murder and opposed revenue collection. Though ultimately Jagabandhu surrendered and was pardoned by the British authorities who granted the former a pension in lieu of the surrender of Buxi title, yet they recognized the genuineness of his cause. A British officer R Hunter observed: "They (British authorities) had virtually had to admit defeat by offering him (Jagabandhu) pardon. Though Jagabandhu surrendered himself he was really the victor in the fight between him and the British"[1]. In 1827 the people of Tapang garh refused to pay rent and rebelled under the leadership of Samanta Madhab Chandra Routroy (the *paik* leader or Dalbehera). Eight years after this rebellion Madhusudan Bipra, an eye witness wrote a *kavya*, entitled *Firinghi Kali Bharat* which gives an account of the conflicts of the Khurda people with the British and particularly the rebellion at Tapang. In 1836 the *paikas* and Kandhas of Banpur who had been all long seething with discontent rose in a serious outburst. The kingpins of this rebellion were Sharan Singh (Surrun Singh) and Kruttibas Patasani both of whom were transported overseas for life. There was a Kandha leader, names Lochan Bisoyi in the Banpur rebellion of 1836.

The basic factor behind the discontent that fuelled rebellion in Khurda in 1817 and afterwards was economic. Overassessment,

dispossession of many original proprietors, who failed to pay revenue, resumption of rent-free tenures enjoyed by Dalabeheras,Dalais and *paikas*, rise of salt price under monopoly system and depreciation and abolition of *kauri* currency were the causes of popular discontent before the rebellion of 1817. The support of the discontented tribals (i.e. Kandhas spread over three geographically contiguous regions i.e. Khurda,Banpur and Ghumsur) and hill chiefs was of great help to Buxi Jagabandhu in organizing and carrying on rebellious activities. Tribal discontent against colonial rule later on found manifestation in violation of forest laws during nationalist movement in Gandhian era. A contemporary British officer, named W Ker characterized the rebellion of 1817 as a freedom movement in the following words:

"Jagabandhu has given a lead in organizing a movement, no matter in how haphazard manner for ousting the newly established English from Orissa; he expected that other people who (were) also hit hard by the mal-administration under the English and the Orissa chiefs who had been deprived of all their freedom would follow up the lead to make a common cause with him for the purpose of liberating their motherland from foreign yole[2]"

Whether freedom movement or resistance movement, the rebellion of 1817 became a source of inspiration for the nationalist leaders and intellectuals of Khurda, such as Godavarish Mishra of Satyavadi School, poet Godavarish Mahapatra, the composer of the stirring poem "Utha kankala" (Oh, Skeletons, arise) and leftist politicians and intellectuals like Pananath Patnaik.Sachi Routroy and Gangadhar Paikaray. Godavarish Mishra wrote on it a historical novel, entitled *Athara Shaha Satara* (Eighteen hundred and seventeen). At the time of Dasahara, in 1937, with the help of his

associates, such as Gokul Mohan Raichudamani and Purn Chandra Mahanty Prananath Patnaik organized a rally of the descendants of erstwhile *paikas* with traditional dress and weapons at Gurjang. The organization of this rally by Patnaik may be viewed as a political gimmick. But the enthusiastic response of the people showed how the rebellion of 1817 had struck their chords. As Gokul Mohan Raychudamani observes;

> After the *paik* rebellion British imperialists virtually buried the once powerful *paik* race of Khurda. Prananath Patnaik infused new life into the skeleton-like *paikas* by giving a call in the spirit of late Godavarish Mahapatra's "Utha Kankala "(Oh skeletons! arise) invocation. In 1936, in the first general election he was elected to the Legislative Assembly as a Congress candidate. Immediately thereafter he organized the youth rally of Khurda. His main objective was that *paikas* will proudly march in the streets of Khurda with sword and shield; they will regain their lost glory. In fact the great *paika* procession of that day roused new life, inspiration and hope like elixir[3].

Khurda became a part of the Puri district in 1829, and from the late nineteenth century onwards socio-political consciousness grew in Khurda as a result of growth of modern education and influence of nationalist movement in Puri district, spearheaded by the Satyavadi School.Khurda was one of the eight places where a vernacular school was established in 1844 according to the scheme of Governor General Lord Hardinge. Subsequently schools were established in other places such as Tangi, Banapur, Begunia, Bhubaneswar and Janla in 1858-9. The Khurda vernacular school was subsequently elevated to the status of Middle English School (in 1867) and High English School (1896). The Khurda High English School was named as BJB High School in memory of Buxi Jagabandhu after independence. According to a report in *Utkal Dipika*,as early as 1882,some educated people of Khurda such as

Fakir Charan Ray (the teacher of Orada school, Shyam Sundar Ray Dalabehera (his student) and Antarymi Patnaik (sub-inspector of schools) were planning to spread female education in Khurda[4]. In course of time the alumni of Khurda High English School became instrumental in rousing the socio-political consciousness of the people.

In pre-Gradhain era the Swadeshi movement of Bengal had some stimulating effect on the weavers and cane goods producers of Banpur[5]. With the beginning of Non-cooperation movement attempts were made by the Congress leaders of Puri like Gopabandhu Das and Jagabandhu Singh to mobilise people of Khurda, hailing from different sections such as Sarbarakars, village revenue officers, ryots and primary school teachers. Gopabandhu and Jagabandhu addressed meetings at Khandagiri (8 October 1920) and Jatani (16 October 1920). In his addresses in Khurda villages Gopabandhu focused on public resentment against forest laws, *chaukidari* tax and union board tax[6]. The students of Khurda H.E School played an active role in the Non-Cooperation movement. On 21 january 1921 they arranged a meeting to boycott the school and attended the meeting at Satyabadi, Sakhigopal[7]. About eleven students of Khurda H.E School participated in the Non-cooperation movement[8]. Due to the active involvement of the students of this school in the movement the authorities felt the necessity of curbing their activities. Consequently the students had to seek the permission of police even to go in procession for the immersion of the image of Goddess Saraswari[9]. Narsingh Charan Chow Patnaik was the main leader of Non-cooperation movement in Khurda. There were other Non-cooperators, such as Digamber Srichandan, Krupasindhu Hota, Daitari Mishra,Gopi Singh,Hari Mallik and Sadananda Tripathy[10]. Associated with the Non-cooperation movement there

was a movement of tribals and poor peasants of Khurda to violate forest laws, which was supported by the student activists[11]. On 10 February 1922 in a gathering of two thousand people at Khurda Gopabandhu gave a call to stop payment of rent and jungle tax[12].

The authorities adopted stern repressive measures being alarmed at the growth of agitational activities. Gopabandhu Das was detained as an undertrial prisoner in Khurda from 28 October to 29 November 1921 for publishing a news item, entitled "Serious if true" in his mouthpiece Samaj, criticizing the alleged molestation of a woman in market place by two constables in the Begunia P.S. Though he did not defend himself, finally he was acquitted[13]. Meetings were prohibited. In March 1922 the police resorted to incendiary activities in Khurda and Begunia, In defiance of the police ban, in January 1922, at Tribeni *mela* held in Banamalipur the Congress voluteers sold *Khadi* goods, carried on picketting and shouted the slogan 'Mahatma Gandhiki Jay'[14]. In spite of prohibitory orders and other obstructions like deployment of constables, chowkidars and scavengers on all roads leading to the venue of meeting for preventing people, sprinkling of wine by scavengers on gentle men and hanging of drums in their necks for the purpose of insulting, Gopabandhu Das addressed a public meeting at Khurda in February 1922[15].

The second all-Orissa provincial conference was held at Bolgarh on 14-15 November 1925. When this place was chosen as the venue of the conference in supersession of the claim of Puri there was some resentment at the latter place. This conference was presided over by Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the first secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committer. On 13 November, along with Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Birakishor Das and Rajakrushna Bose,

Bhagirathi Mahapatra arrived at Khurda Road railway station by passenger train. They were garlanded by volunteers and carried in motor lorry to Bolgarh. On the way, at places like Khurda and Begunia the people greeted these leaders by raising the slogan 'Mahatma Gandhi Jay'. The Bolgarh conference passed a resolution moved by Gopabandhu Dash and Raghunath Mahapatra, expressing resentment over the restrictions imposed by the Government on securing the required timber and fuel from the forest in Khurda[16].

During the Civil Disobedience Movement the student leaders of Khurda such as Nrusingh Charan Samanta Singhar, Laxmidhar Patnaik,Shyam Sundar Senapati and Balaram Patra played active roles. With the financial help of the zamindar of Janla some school students decided to proceed to the nearby sea coast for manufacturing contraband salt[17] A Congress flag was fixed on the roof of the H.E school building by some students on 15 April 1930. On 16 April some students organized *hartal* in the school and Khurda town [18]. Nrusingh Charan Samanta Singhar was very active in organising Civil Disobedience movement in Puri and Khurda. He was externed form the Puri towm while trying to organize a *hartal* in the town. In Khurda Samanta Singhar, Shyama Sundar Senapati and Balaram Patra were moving from village to village, asking the students to boycott the schools and the villagers to defy Government officials and violate laws. Samanta Singhar and Senapati were arrested on the charge of intimidating the village Chowkidars and tearing foreign cloth[19]. After the second session of Round Table conference, when Civil Disobedience movement was resumed, Prananath Patnaik and eleven others were arrested for picketting before the foreign cloth shops in Jatani. They wear tried and jailed[20].

As in case of Non-cooperation movement, during Civil Disobedience movement the tribals and poor peasants of Khurda carried on agitation to secure right for using both the protected and reserve forests. To check the violation of forest laws, under the Indian Forest Act the *paikas* were empowered to arrest the offenders and the sub-divisional officer of Khurda was vested with powers to grant rewards to those who detected the forest law violators[21].

The withdrawal of Civil Disobedience movement was followed by socialist and peasant movements, Gandhian constructive work and states people's movement. Each of these movements had more or less some impact on Khurda.

Before the formation of all India Congress Socialist party Utkal Congress Socialist Workers League had been organized with *Sarathi* as its mouthpiece. The following were the members of its executive-Nabakrushna Chaudhury (general secretary), Malati Chaudhury (treasurer), Surendra Nath Dwivedi,Dibakar Patnaik, Gauri Shankar Samanta,Nrupendra Narayan Sen, Goura Chandra Das,Prananath Patnaik and Gatikrushna Swain[22]. Prananath Patnaik who had studied in Kashi Vidyspiths during the period 1932-34, got shastri degree, and had been indoctrinated in Marxist ideology by the principal of the Vidyapitha Acharya Narendra Deva presided over the first session of Orissa Congress Socialist party, held in the residence of Nabakrushna Chaudhury at Cuttack in 1934[23]. In October 1934, in a meeting, held at Bombay all-India Congress Socialist party was organized with delegates from thirteen states. On 10 June 1935 a peasant conference was held in the Cuttack town hall under the chairmanship of Godavarish Mishra. On 10 August 1935 the socialists of Orissa formed a Kishan Sangha with

Harekrushna Mahtab as the president. In April 1936 the annual sessions of Indian National Congress and all India Kishan Sabha were held at Lucknow. S.N Dwivedi and Nabakrushna Chadhury attended the subject committee of the all-India Kishan Sabha held at Lucknow under the presidentship of Swami Sahajananda of Bihar. From Orissa the following were elected as the members of the working committee of All-India Kishan Sabha-Harekrushna Mahtab,Nabakrushna Chaudhury,Malati Chaudhury,Dibakar Patnaik and Gatikrushna Swain[24].

After the Lucknow sessions of Indian National Congress and all-India Kishan Sabha peasant meetings were held in different places and the socialist leaders like Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Prananath Patnaik,Gangadhar Mishra,Gatikrushna Swain, Gokul Mohan Raichudamani, Mohan Das, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi and others tried to unite the peasants under socialist banner. In a meeting held at Puri on 10 May 1936 a committee was formed, consisting of Nabakrushna Chaudhury. Harekrushna Mahatab,Godavarish Mishra,Jagabandhu Singh and Gorachand Patnaik to look into peasants'sgrievances and consult public opinion regarding the amendment of Orissa Tenancy Act[25]. A meeting of the working committee of Utkal Provincial Kishan Sabha was held at Puri on 14 August 1936.A sub-committee was formed, consisting of H.K Mahtab,N.K.Chaudhury,Rajakrushna Bose, Lingaraj Mishra and Malati Chaudhury to inquire into the grievances of peasants and submit a report to provincial Congress committee[26]. On 20 August 1936 the working committee of the Puri district Kishan Sangha passed a resolution authorizing Prananath Patnaik and Gajendra Mishra to carry on investigation into the condition of peasants and submit their findings to a high level three-men committee (consisting of Gorachand Patnaik,NK. Chaudhury and H.K Mahtab) who

would move the Government for reduction of rent[27]. On 1 September 1936 all India Kishan day was observed in different places of Orişsa and resolutions were passed,demanding reduction of rent, amendment of tenancy laws and relief of the peasants' indebtedness[28]. In September 1936 Prananath Patnaik organized a huge meeting of the peasants in Chandmari field of Khurda which was chaired by Nabakrushna Chaudhury and attended by Jadumani Mangaraj, Rajakrushna Bose, Mohan Das and Pyari Shankar Roy[29], and a sub-divisional peasants'committee, consisting of 50 members was formed at Khurda[30].

On 2 November 1936 a peasant's conference was held at Bhubaneswar with Rajakrushna Bose on chair. This conference passed resolutions, demanding reduction of land revenue, free primary education, abolition of indirect taxation, reduction of rate of interest by money-lenders and amendment of tenancy Act. This conference supported the minimum political and economic demands of peasants as formulated in the Lucknow session of all India Kishan Sabha and the candidature of Prananath Patnaik for election to Orissa Legislative Assembly[31]. The visit of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress President from 10 to 12 November 1936 before the Assembly election and his appeal to the peasants roused great enthusiasm. Nehru addressed public meetings in Bhubaneswar .Puri, Sakhigopal, Pipili, Nimapada,Delanga, Jatani and Khurda.On 15 November 1936 Utkal Provincial Kishan conference was held at Puri under the presidentship of Swami Sahajananda. It was attended by a large number of peasants from all parts of Orissa[32].

After formation of Congress Ministry the peasants became more assertive in their demands. In Puri district the tenants declined to pay rent and ex-communicated the Zamindars[33], On 1 March

1937 a branch of the socialist party was opened at Khurda with Gokul Mohan Raichudamani as Secretary[34]. The nature of peasant unrest in undivided Puri district in 1937 and 1938 can be understood from the following official weekly report of 8 May 1938; "There is no doubt that several prominent leaders of outwardly divergent political persuasions are pooling their energies with a view to create disaffection among the peasantry. During the week under report in Puri district alone there have been no less than eighteen political meetings. Babu Harekrushna Mahtab, now a member of the All-India Congress Working Committee has been on a prolonged tour of propaganda in the interiors of the district (he himself addressing nine meetings),accompanied by prominent adherents to the socialist creed. Undisguised reference to a future mass no tax campaign in conjuction with a possible general strike on railways and in key industries with a view to crippling the administration and ultimately to drive the British out of India clearly show the persistent preaching of Communist leaders elsewhere is now resulting in similar rhetoric in Orissa. Every effort, it seems, is to be made to intensify this propaganda during the present non-agricultural season, when the peasantries are for the most part not actively occupied"[35].

From 25 to 31 March 1938 the fourth annual session of Gandhi Seva Sangha was held at Beraboi near Delang. It was attended by Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders such as Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad,Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, J B Kripalini, P Sitaramyya and Prafulla Chandra Ghosh. On this occasion the dispute between rival Congress groups was settled.Consequently H K Mahtab voluntarily resigned from the presidentship of UPCC and Gopabandhu Chaudhury was elected as the president and empowered to choose his executive committee. This meeting of Gandhi Seva Sangh drew a large number of people

from different parts of the Puri district and Orissa. Daily public meetings were held. About 30000 people travelled by train to attend the meeting and exhibitation[36]. Khurda H.E School remained closed on 25 March 1938, and under the guidance of six teachers the students went to Beraboi to attend the conference on that day[37]. At that time the Congress Socialists wanted to have a camp at the venue of Gandhi Seva Sangha meeting. Not being allowed to do so, they established their camp in the house of a Communst, named Durgacharan Mahanty, 1 1/2 miles away from the venue and carried on their socialistic propaganda by meetings and distribution of leaflets.

By 1938 the Congress Socialists developed interest in states people's movement.· So far as Khurda was concerned, its socialist leaders and leftist intellectuals like Prananath Patnaik, Gangadhar Paikaray, Gokul Mohan Raichudamani, and Sachi Routray criticized the allegedly oppressive policy of the Dhenkanal Durbar towards the movement of the people. After Bhuban-Nilakanthapur firing incident, in a public meeting held at Puri on 22 October 1938 Mohan Das M.L.A., Prananath Patnaik, MLA Godavarish Mishra MLA, Gatikrushna Swain and Bhubaneswar Mishra criticized the repressive policy of the Dhenkanal Durbar[38]. Godavarish Mishra subsequently changed his stand for which in a public meeting organized at Siko, Begunia P.S. on 5 December 1938 by Gangadhar Paikray, a resolution was passed demanding the former's resignation from the Assembly and Congress party[39]. When Dhenkanal *satyagraha* was organized by Congress Socialists from outside, from Khurda Gokul Mohan Raichudamani joined it. The Prajamandal movement of Ranpur had a direct bearing on Khurda because of the geographical contiguity. After the Bazalgette murder on 5 January 1939, fearing police reprisal a large number of people from Ranpur

state took shelter in the villages of Khurda from Banpur to Bolgarh[40]. In some villages of Khurda meetings were held condemning the murder. For example, in a public meeting, held in Barapari village under the chairmanship of a *Sarbarakar,* named Benudhar Patnaik on 18 January 1939, a resolution was passed condemning the murder and holding Congress workers from outside responsible for it[41]. On the other hand, the Socialists, led by Prananath Patnaik formed a defence committee under the chairmanship of a lawyer, named Lokanath Mishra to help those who were tried as the accused in the Bazalgette murder case. Dinabandhu Sahu, Gadadhar Jena and Shatrughna Mohanty acted as defence lawyers[42].

By 1939 the Communists were singled out as a separate group within the Congress Socialist Party, and it was found that a section of Congress Socialists owed allegiance to Subhas Chandra Bose. As early as 1935 Guru Charan Patnaik had become a secret member of the banned Communist Party[43]. In 1936 Prananath Patnaik, Gurucharan Patnaik and Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi formed a secret Communist party. According to S N Dwivedi, in a meeting held at Cuttack under the chairmanship of Ramakrushna Pati a decision was taken to form Communist party in Orissa, and in 1940 Communists were expelled from Congress[44]. Under these circumstances in 1939 Nabakrushna Chaudhury had dissolved the Congress Socialist Party and Krushak Sabha in Orissa. In fact the Communists had been trying to indoctrinate the peasants in their ideology while remaining within the Congress Socialist party. As pointed out by Ashish Mahapatra, while remaining a member of Congress Party and a legislator, Prananath was openly implementing the mass programme of the Communist party and in large areas of Khurda, Jatani, Chandaka, Bolgarh and Begunia the flag of Communist party was flying along with those of Congress and

Krushak Subha[45]. In Khurda peasant movement was led by the Communists. Prananath Patnaik and his fellow Communists like Gokul Mohan Raichudamani, Parashuram Padatikaray, Gangadhar Mishra, Laxman Patnaik, Raghunath Patnaik, Gangadhar Paikray, Sadhu Charan Mahanti, Baikunthamith Subuddhi, Niranjan Jagaddeba, Upendra Nath Das, Damodar Mishra, Puna Chandra Mahanti and others carried on movement in Khurda for abolition of *Sarbarakari* system, repeal of *khas mahal law,* and amendment of forest law and tenancy act. Songs of the leftist poets - Ananta Patnaik and Sachi Routray which were published in the form of a booklet, called *Raktashikha* (flame of blood), and distributed by Gokul Mohan Raichudamani were being sung by the Communists in the villages of Khurda[46]. The Communist-led peasant movement not only aimed at the redressal of peasants' agrarian grievance but also overthrow of imperialism and capture of power by the peasants. In the Patia peasants' conference held on 10 November 1937 under the chairmanship of Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi the Secretary of Orissa Socialist party and attended by 5000 people, where the Communists like Sachi Routroy, Anant Patnaik, Bijay Chandra Das, Prananath Patnaik and Gauranga Charan Das were present Panigrahi said. "If the peasants in India would unite, they would one day rule the country. Congress was fighting for *Swaraj* but this would be of no avail if after the British left India, control remained in the hands of the capitalists such as the Rajahs of Kanika and Parlakimedi". Criticizing the Congress ministry Sachi Routroy said: "When the British government authorized Congress to take over the government, the zamindars and capitalists in the Congress were tempted and have now become ministers. The present ministers of Orissa belong to this class of exploiters. The present government consisting of *goondas* should not be helped at any time". Ananta Patnaik held that Congress was controlled by the capitalists and *zamindars* where

men like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were a few honourable exceptions, and that the three ministers of the Government of Orissa were money lenders and *zamindars* who would not possibly try to ameliorate the condition of masses[47]. The activities of the Communists were disliked not only by the zamindars and *sarbarakars* but also by a large section of Congressmen. In a Kishan Sabha meeting of the Chandaka thana, held in the village Mendhasal on 24 February 1939 held under the chairmanship of Sadhu Charan Mahanti, the chairman pointed out that the meeting was attended by a small number of people because of the fact that policemen, *Sarbarakars* and some Congressmen had given an impression to the people that the meeting would be raided by the Gurkha military[48].

As the international situation was heading towards a global war, the Communist-led *Kisan sabhas* were passing resolutions not to help Britain in the coming war, but to take advantage of the weakness of Britain. In the Patia peasants' conference of 10 November 1937 it was resolved that India should not take part in any imperialistic war in future[49]. Similar resolution was passed in the *kisan sabha* meeting of Chandaka thana, held on 24 February 1939[50], and that of Chhanagiri Hat held on 29 August 1939[51] on the eve of Second World War. The Chhanagiri Hat meeting urged the Congress Working Committee to withdraw disciplinary action against Subhas Chandra Bose in order to open the door for unity between leftists and rightists. After the outbreak of Second World War, for delivering anti-war speech Prananath Patnaik, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Sadhu Charan Mahanti and Puma Chandra Mahanti were arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment after trial in the court of sub-divisional magistrate of Khurda[52]. According to police report in April 1940 in Bolgarh a socialist named Fakir Charan

Mahanty was dissuading people from contributing to war fund and inducing them to break forest laws[53]. In December 1940, to a large crowd in Khurda Prananath Patnaik read out Gandhi's message and was arrested as an individual *Satyagrahi*[54]. It is held by Manmohan Mishra that though Prananath did not believe in the efficacy of Individual Civil Disobedience movement, he was instructed by the Communist high command that as an active member of the Congress party he should obey Mahatma Gandhi's call for individual civil disobedience[55]. On 9 August 1942 the office of Communist party was inaugurated at Cuttack. Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi became its first secretary. Prananath Patnaik publicly joined the Communist party on this occasion. At that time because of alliance between Britain and Soviet Russia against Nazi Germany Communist party no longer opposed war. But Prananath Patnaik was arrested and sent to Berhampur jail on return from the inauguration ceremony at Cuttack[56]. He was released in 1945.

During the war, on 8 May 1941, the Communists organized all Utkal Provincial peasants' conference at Khurda. The conference urged the peasants to remain alert about exploitation by capitalists and imperialists and cooperate with all anti-imperialist activities[57]. After independence the Communists of Khurda, led by Prananath Patnaik started the *Tebhaga* movement with a view to giving two - third of produce to share croppers.

During Quit India movement the Government declared under section 30 of the Police Act that no procession or meeting would be organized in Puri, Khurda and Jatani without prior permission from the local authorities. In spite of official prohibition on 16 and 31 August 1942 the students of Puri, Nimapara, Khurda, Olsingh

and Banapur H.E Schools went on strike[58]. In Bhubaneswar and Delang telegraph wires were cut[59].

On 14 August 1947 before 12 PM. a large number of people gathered in the Chandmari field of Khurda to celebrate the independence of India. Cannons were fired twenty one times, which were followed by other fire works. Next day in the morning a large procession went through the town of Khurda, and at 4 PM. a public meeting was held in the midst of torrential rains[60].

Resistance to British rule in Khurda in the early phase has left behind its legacy in two forms; one is a glorification of the chivalrous military tradition of the *Paikas;* even today when the society has undergone so much change, if a *Paika* rally is organized, the descendants of old *Paikas* would come forward to join it; another legacy is a controversy between the adorers of Jayi Rajguru and those of Buxi Jagabandhu as to who was the true rebel or greater rebel than the other. Since Jayi Rajguru was hanged by the British, he is regarded by many as the first martyr of the freedom struggle in Orissa. On the other hand Buxi Jagabandhu who is regarded by his adorers as the organizer of the first freedom struggle in India and is admired for carrying on prolonged underground resistance is criticized by his detractors for his ultimate compromise with the British authorities (He surrendered to the British in 1825 and died a pensioner in 1829). Violation of forest law i.e. assertion of right by the people to use forest was an important local issue in the freedom movement of Khurda during the nationalist era. Peasant movement, led and organized by Communists from 1930's onwards up to the Tebhaga movement was a significant aspect of freedom movement in Khurda, which accounts for the predominant role of

Communist politicians like Prananath Patnaik and Gangadhar Paikaray in the post-independence electoral politics in this area.

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III

THE KEONJHAR INSURRECTION OF 1891

The insurrection of the Bhuyans and Juangs against Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo, the Maharaja of Keonjhar,[1] which occurred in 1891 and was suppressed by the colonial authorities is a significant theme in the sub-altern historiography of colonial Orissa. The archival materials on this insurrection, available in the National Archives of India and Orissa State Archives give us detailed informations about its cause and course and the immediate and long term measures, adopted by the colonial authorities to deal with it. It was also given coverage in the contemporary periodicals of Orissa, such as *Utkal Dipika, Utkal Sahitya* and *Sambalpur Hitaishini*. Phakir Mohan Senapati, the father figure of modern Oriya prose literature who was the Manager of the Maharaja of Keonjhar at the time of this insurrection has given a somewhat detailed description about it in his autobiography, published in 1918. This insurrection was basically a large-scale mobilization of the two tribal communities-the Bhuyans and Juangs under the leadership of a semi-educated Bhuyan (surveyor by training), named Dharanidhar Naik, although in the later stage it was supported by others.[2] Some leading lights of the contemporary Oriya Caste Hindu intelligentsia class were associated with this insurrection in different capacities; as the Manager of the Maharaja of Keonjhar, Phakir Mohan Senapati played some role in quelling the uprising; Rai Bahadur Nandakishore Das, a statutory civilian was the assistant superintendent of Tributary Mahals at the time of the outbreak of this uprising and became the Government's political agent in Keonjhar after the suppression of the rebellion; Madhusudan Das, the first qualified lawyer of Orissa

acted as the counsel on behalf of the Maharaja of Keonjhar and helped the latter in retaining his *guddi.*

According to English officials such as G Toynbee, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals of Orissa and H Wylly, the Manager of Mayurbhanja and Babu Gour Chandra Sen, the officiating Manager of Pal Lahara State, the misgovernment of Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo, the Maharaja of Keonjhar was the primary cause of the insurrection of 1891 in his state. Toynbee observed: "They (the causes of insurrection) all resolve themselves into the patent fact of the grossest misgovernment by the Maharaja and his subordinates".[3] H Wylly described the Maharaja of Keonjhar as" a most inconsiderate and tyrannical ruler".[4] G.C. Sen pointed out: "It is generally believed that since as long time the Maharaja of Keonjhar, being misled by the evil advice of his police head constable Narayan Poi and others has been committing or indulging in inhuman and oppressive acts which have materially injured the Life and Property of Bhuyans."[5] According to Phakir Mohan Senapati, the employment of Bhuyans as *bethi* (unpaid) labourers by the Maharaja and his assistant manager Bichitrananda Das in the digging of a canal for the diversion of a hill stream, called Machhakandana Joda was the primary cause of the insurrection.[6] The Maharaja denied the charges of misgovernment and tyranny and attributed the "disturbance" to "the intrigues of one Dharanidhar Naik who was recently dismissed from his service".[7] The Maharaja sought to justify his alleged acts of injustice on the plea that they were based on time-honoured customs. The people complained that Maharaja was quartering his elephants,ninety seven in number, in the villages and that the inhabitants of the villages were being compelled to give them fodder without any payment.[8] Maharaja held that the quartering of elephants was "an old Keonjhari Custom" and that certain

allowances were paid for such elephants keep in the villages.[9] About the complaint of *bethi* or forced labour Maharaja held that it was paid for by rent-free holdings and that this custom was limited to pulling the car of Lord Jagannath, fetching wood from forest and thatching the Maharaja's buildings.[10] But there was a strong feeling among the people against the practice of *bethi*; they wanted its abolition, as it was being abused. It was alleged that the Maharaja had established monopoly over the trade ad money-lending of the state and imposed his own terms over them.[11] Gour Chandra Sen held that the Maharaja purchased the corns of the people" at a very low rate" and did not allow them to sell elsewhere.[12] The people bitterly complained against the special contribution or *Panchak* for special occasions. The Maharaja pleaded that the *Panchak* was collected as per custom according to the decision of Panchayats.[13] The people resented the excesses, assaults and illegal acts of such officials as *amlas, Paiks* and Policemen.[14]

When Toynbee was at Keonjhar in June 1891, for inquiring into the causes of insurrection, he interviewed the Bhuyan insurgents in the absence as well as presence of the Maharaja. When he confronted them with the Maharaja, they half-heartedly withdrew the complaints which had been laid during the latter's absence. Nevertheless Toynbee felt convinced about Maharaja's "most continued and flagrant mismanagement and want of supervision", his unwillingness to do his duty towards the subjects, because there was no such discontent among the inhabitants of Mayurbhanja, Pal Lahara, Dhenkanal and other tributary states who were "similar in caste, race, habits and feelings" to those of Keonjhar.[15]

The employment of Bhuyans as *bethi* labourers in the digging of hill for diverting the course of the Machhakandana hill stream was the immediate, if not the only cause, of the insurrection of

1891.G.C. Sen held that the Bhuyans considered their employment as *bethi* labourers for this purpose" as revenge taken by the Maharaja for their last rising against him in 1867".[16] Phakir Mohan has given the following description of the Bhuyans' resentment against their employment as forced labour in this digging which was conducted under the supervision of Babu Bichitrananda Das, the assistant manager.

> In the digging of the canal the Bhuyans were engaged as Bethi labourers. Bichitrananda babu wanted the *Bethias* to work hard like him. With utmost strain the *Bethias* could break the stones with the help of heavy iron tools, weighing ten to fifteen kilograms for digging the canal. They worked from morning till evening. At 12 noon they were allowed to take rest for two hours. If a *Bethia* neglected his work slightly, he was beaten. The *Bethias* were not even provided with rice. Those *Bethias* who brought rice from home cooked their food. Those poor fellows who could not procure rice had to sleep without taking any food. Being thoroughly enraged the Bhuyans united and revolted. They wanted to kill Bichitrananda Babu, the assistant manager and overthrow the Raja. Had Bichitrananda Babu been captured by them, he would have undoubtedly been beheaded.[17]

When Phakir Mohan was made captive by the Bhuyan insurgents, one of them who wanted to pierce him with arrow told the former: "Bichitra had made me work from morning to evening without giving any food. I will take revenge by killing you."[18]

The Bhuyans were unhappy with Maharaja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo from the beginning of his reign. They had opposed his accession to the *guddi* of Keonjhar in 1868 on the ground of his alleged illegitimacy and staged a formidable rebellion which could be suppressed with the help of colonial authorities. In his special judgement on the insurrection of 1891 Toynbee therefore observed: "It should not be forgotten that the Maharajah was forced on the Bhuiyas in 1868 and that he is so unpopular that he can not

continue his rule without Government support."[19] The Bhuyans cherished a time-honoured notion that as Keonjhar was their domain, nobody could be the ruler of Keonjhar without their assent and that they had a right to remove an unwanted ruler.[20] By 1890 the Bhuyans were seething with discontent against the Maharaja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo and wanted a person could lead them in an insurrection against the latter. They found their leader in Dharanidhar Naik, an educated Bhuyan whose father had been killed in the rebellion of 1868.[21]

Dharanidhar was a surveyor. With the financial help of Maharaja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo he had undergone a survey course in the Cuttack Survey School, staying in the lodge of the former. On completion of his education he joined as a surveyor under the Maharaja. A few months after working under him, Dharanidhar started vilifying the former as a tyrant, sought to establish himself as a parallel authority as the adopted son of Maharani (Empress Victoria?) and promised to redress the grievances of Bhuyans.[22] Already discontented with the Maharaja, the Bhuyans rallied round Dharanidhar. He had some personal grounds to rovolt against the Maharaja. He had to work on honorary basis. According to official source he was dismissed from service.[23] It is held by people in Keonjhar that he was subjected to humiliation and ill-treatment in the Maharaja's kutchery because of his tribal origin.

Initially Dharanidhar appears to have adopted the method of sending petitions to the officials for redressing the people's grievances. He also had discussions with his relatives like his brother-in-law Narendra Mahapatra of Singhbhum, his brother Gopal Naik and followers to find out remedial measures. In May 1890 Dharanidhar called a *Panchayat* in the village Pawari. This meeting was "chiefly attended by Bhuiyans and Juangs- people who had

suffered most."[24] Having heard of this meeting the Maharaja sent his assistant manager Bichitrananda Das to inquire into the matter. After Bichitrananda's inquiry, Narayan Poi, Maharaja's head constable arrested 74 persons out of whom 13 were kept in *hajat* (judicial custody). But Dharanidhar, his brother Gopal Naik and some other "ring leaders" including Narendra Mahapatra managed to escape[25]. Towards December 1890 or January 1891 some people of Keonjhar, including Dharanidhar, sent a petition to H. Wylly, the Manager of Mayurbhanja for the onward transmission of the same to the Superintendent, informing him about imprisonment of some persons by the Maharaja and the alleged killing of 6 or 7 of them.[26] On March 16, 1891 the Maharaja requested the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals to allow him to serve warrant for arrest on some Keonjhar insurgents outside Keonjhar, in Chyebassa or Mayurbhanja.[27] While the Superintendent wanted to know the cause of warrant, to which the Maharaja gave no reply, Dharanidhar sent a petition to the Superintendent against the Maharaja, asking for an inquiry into his alleged tryranny.[28] The Superintendent sent the petition to the Maharaja, asking for a report. The Maharaja, in his report denied all the allegations, levelled against him by the insurgents[29].

By the beginning of May 1891 Dharnidhar decided to abandon "the role of redresser of grievances" at the head of "peaceable remonstrants." He openly raised the standard of rebellion and finally called himself *Tikayat* or heir-apparent. This change of policy was due to the increase in the number of his followers and the arrest of his brother Gopal and some of his "consultors."[30] Originally Dharanidhar and his followers might have thought of the redressal of the people's grievances or at the most of making Keonjhar a directly ruled territory or *Moghulbandi*.[31] But at the

later stage he behaved like the chief of Keonjhar. He made Phakir Mohan, the arrested Manager his Minister and engaged him in regular official duties. He offered to make a treaty with the Maharaja of Keonjhar, "provided he submits to him and settles his claims."[32] The Bhuyan women came forward to show reverence to him by blowing conch shells; they washed his feet and worshipped him with flowers.[33] When Dawson, the Superintendent of Police who commanded the armed Police men, sent to suppress the rebellion reached Dharanidhar's camp after the latter's surrender, he found a parallel administrative set-up.

> The camp was composed of tents spread all over the place, each set having its special purpose. One place was a *hajat*; another a jail; a third a *thana* and so on- even to a place where a parade had been arranged for my (Dawson's) execution as related by the released manager. On our arrival the camp was to a great extent deserted; still there were a good number of people there and in every hut there were bows and arrows, axes, swords and guns; also three of the cannon taken from the Maharaja's fort of Kaliprasad. Besides these we found Dharani's *sherishta*.[34]

It is argued in favour of Dharanidhar that he "restrained his followers to the utmost extent of his power from committing decoity and other excesses."[35] Phakir Mohan, the Maharaja's Manager who became a captive in the hands of insurgents would have been killed without Dharanidhar's protection. According to Earle, the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhoom there were "a large number of people following the rebels in the hopes of picking up loot", who had nothing to do with insurrection.[36] Nevertheless as the leader of a tribal insurrection. Dharanidhar was responsible for the looting and other excesses of the insurgents, because looting, decoity and such excesses were the essential features of such rebellions. On 4 May 1891, at a place, called Nayagarh Dharanidhar issued a proclamation to the effect that those who had grievances should come to him for

redress, that there would be looting or other excesses and that if any of the Rajah's servants were captured they should be brought to him.[37] Dharanidhar also threatened to plunder the houses of those who had left Keonjhar after Bhuyans' insurrection for fear of oppression, if they did not return and resume agricultural operations.[38] Though probably Dharanidhar himself did not take part in looting or decoity he allowed stolen property to be kept in his camp. Initially the insurgents looted those villages where the Maharaja's officials stayed or castes other than Bhuyans and Juangs lived.[39]

On 2 May 1891, the Bhuyan insurgents, 500 in number, suddenly attacked the village Chamukpore where the Maharaja had a fort; they looted the property of villagers and beat some of them. After this raid the insurgents looted the Maharaja's *Kutchery* at Kalikaprasad and other villages. They finally encamped at Raisua where their number increased to 20,000.[40] They collected food, money and other articles from the villagers. Most of the Zamindars and *Paiks* deserted the Maharaja and went over to the insurgents. On 24 May 1891, Gour Chandra Sen, the officiating Manager of Pal lahara wrote to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals." The rising is not confined to the Bhuyans and Koles now but extended to the majority of the subjects of the Maharajah of Keonjhar.[41]

Soon after the outbreak of the rising the Maharaja fled to Anandpur, situated n the south-eastern extremity of Keonjhar. He sent Phakir Mohan, the Manager who was looking after Anandpur portion of his state to the Superintendent for seeking the Government's help to suppress the rising. Later Maharaja himself went to Cuttack and met the Superintendent. The Superintendent had already been apprised about the rising and felt convinced about Maharaj's responsibility for the insurrection.

On 15 May 1891 about 2000 insurgents attacked the Keonjhargarh (the Maharaja's palace). They were repulsed by the Maharaja's men with the loss of three killed and four wounded. But the insurgents succeeded in obtaining some fire arms and guns and looting Maharaja's treasury; they also released some convicts from jail.[42]

In the mean time Maharaja and his Manager Phakir Mohan planned to proceed to the *garh*. After getting a letter from the Ranee, the Maharaja changed his plan and decided to go back to Cuttack.[43] But Phakir Mohan proceeded towards the garh with 250 *Paiks* (old and wretched *Bethias*), 4 constables and 3 elephants. On the way, on 19 May 1891, Senapati and his retinue were made captives by the insurgents in a village, named Basantapur. The captives some of whom were chained were asked to proceed to Raisua. Phakir Mohan was kept in charge of a guard and engaged in clerical duty under the order of the rebel leader Dharanidhar Naik. While other rebel leaders like Gopal Naik and Narendra Mahapatra suspected Phakir Mohan, Dharanidhar considered his services indispensable for managing a large state like his[44].

In the meantime, in response to Maharaja's request the Superintendent and the Lieutenant Governor took steps to put down the insurrection. As a result of discussion between the Superintendent and the Commissioner and Inspector General of Chota Nagpur, on 14 May 1891, 150 armed police men arrived on the Singhbhoom frontier under the Command of Dawson, an experienced Superintendent of Police to cooperate with one hundred police men from Cuttack under the Command of Guise, the district Superintendent of Police, Balasore. The Lieutenant Governor planned to send a wing of the 17th Native Infantry to reinforce the police force under the Command of Dawson and Guise. He also

ordered G. Toynbee, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals to proceed to Keonjhar for conducting an inquiry into the insurrection and settle problems arising out of it.

Dawson's force reached Keonjhar earlier than Guise's force. Before attacking the rebels' camp at Raisua on 24 May, 1891, Dawson sent Shashi Bhusan Ray (the police sub-inspector who knew Dharanidhar and had some dealing with the latter) and Bhagawan Sirdar, a local gentleman to the rebels' camp with a letter, asking Dharanidhar to surrender on favourable terms. Dharanidhar tore it to pieces with his sword. On 27 May Dawson got the alarming intelligence report that Ray and Sirdar had been detained in the rebel camp. Hence he decided to proceed straight to the rebels' camp. Actually both of them returned safe.[45]

On 29 May, at 6 AM, as the armed Policemen proceeded towards Raisua, Dharanidhar surrendered to Dawson dismounting from an elephant belonging to Maharaja in the village Bonjao near Keonjhargarh. While surrendering he drew his sword, and delivered it to Dawson and asked the latter to cut his head off. Immediately Dharanidhar was arrested. One hour after Dharanidhar's surrender Dawson reached the former's camp where he found Phakir Mohan Senapati, some servants of Maharaja three of whom were in chains, and arrested thirty six insurgents. Then Dawson proceeded towards Keonjargarh. During march towards Keonjhar Dawson's force was "threatened with an attack from the hills over which men were swarming in large numbers."[46] Dawson reached Keonjhar at 10.30AM. After one hour Guise's force reached Keonjhar with Maharaja on elephant. On 25 May 1891, a few hours after the delivery of Dawson's letter Guise's letter was handed over to Dharanidhar, calling him to surrender and assuring him inquiry into the people's grievances. Dharanidhar was threatened to be arrested

by force, if he did not obey the letter. But like the earlier letter Dharanidhar tore the latter one to pieces saying that it was "a trap for him to fall into."[47] Guise's force, as it carried the Maharaja in the entourage had to face greater resistance than Dawson's force. "Both these operations ended in blood-shed. The number killed and wounded was about ten in all."[48]

After the suppression of insurrection G. Toynbee came to Keonjhar and stayed there from 16 June to 21st instant. While trying those involved in insurgency, Toynbee inquired into the causes. He held the Maharaja squarely responsible for the rebellion. Toynbee wrote to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal on 16 June:

"So bitter is the feeling against him (Maharaja) that he can only be kept on the *guddi* by the aid of a British Police force. I have already collected much evidence of his maladministration and am inclined to think the permanent peace and good government of the Country can only be secured by his abdication or a by the appointment of a Manager with full Powers in whom the People will have confidence and who will listen to and redress their grievances."[49]

He felt the necessity of a " a root and branch reform" of the administration of Keonjhar.[50] While considering the Maharaja morally responsible for the insurrection, Toynbee held Dharanidhar legally responsible for the excesses, committed by his ignorant followers, and for the state of semi-war. He saw no offence in Dharanidhar's conduct as "the redresser of grievances" by way of laying their wrongs before the authorities, but on the basis of evidences of Shashi Bhusan Ray who visited the rebels' camp and Dawson and the papers, found in the *sherishta* of the rebels' camp, he found Dharanidhar guilty of having proclaimed himself *Tikait* or heir-apparent and sentenced the latter to seven years' rigorous

imprisonment, and Jagannath Naik as well as Surrendra Singh, the two co-accused to two years' rigorous imprisonment; three leaders of decoities at Chamakpur and Kalika Prasad were sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment each; twelve others involved in minor decoity "committed under the order of Dharanidhar and locally inquired into by Mr. Guise were sentenced to receive ten stripes each."[51] The Maharaja was instructed to arrest the leaders of "late disturbance" and try them and remove the unpopular assistant manager Bichitrananda Das and head constable Narayan Poi from service. The Maharaja was instructed to remain in Keonjhar and carry on his administrative work pending the arrival of a manager, appointed by the Government. Bichitrananda Das and Narayan Poi were removed from service. Towards the end of June 1891 Toynbee ordered the Maharaja to hand over the management of his state to H.P. Wylly, the Manager of Mayurbhanja and report before him at Cuttack.[52]

As the Superintendent turned down Maharaja's petition for reinstatement, the latter appealed to the Lieutenant Governor Sir Charles Alfred Elliot with Madhusudan Das as his counsel. Elliot came to Cuttack to settle the Keonjhar matter. On way to Cuttack, at Bhadrak, many people from Keonjhar complained against Maharaja before the Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor decided in favour of the Maharaja's reinstatement in his *guddi*, but at the same time ordered that he would carry on his administration with the advice of a political agent, appointed by the Government. Rai Bahadur Nanda Kishore Das, a statutory civilian was appointed as the political agent. On 19 March 1892 Maharaja left Cuttack for Keonjhargarh with Rai Bahadur Nanda Kishore Das and his counsel Madhusudan Das. When they reached Anandpur, the Bhuyans assembled there and demanded postponement of revenue settlement.

Madhusudan pacified them saying that this matter was not within the purview of the Maharaja and that it would be decided by the political agent Nanda Kishore Das.[53] While Dhanurjay got his *guddi* back, the Bhuyans continued to resist him inspite of drastic measures, adopted by Nanda Kishore Das.

In the conclusion, it seems necessary to analyse the character of insurrection and that of its leader Dharanidhar. The insurrection was basically a tribal one within a princely state against its ruler. It started among the two prominent tribes of Keonjhar-Bhuyans and Juangs and was subsequently supported by others. It started with criminal acts like loot and decoity and finally resulted in establishment of a parallel government and attacks on the legitimate citadel of authority. Dharanidhar is seen by some as a mobiliser against the alleged misgovernment of the Maharaja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo. He has been eulogized as a popular hero and a redresser of grievances. Dharanidhar is also seen as a pretender. According to Phakir Mohan and Toynbee he called himself *Tikayat*, or heir-apparent or *Maharaninka Putra* (son of Empress Victoria). Was he hoping to be the ruler of Keonjhar with the support of Bhuyans, harping on their traditional notion that they had the right to choose their ruler in complete disregard of Paramount Power's legitimate support for Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo? In that case he was a traditional tribal leader, unworthy of the education and exposure he had at Cuttack, the then Capital of Orissa. Probably his ambition grew along with the number of his followers and in the later phase he lost his power of judgement. That is why he tore the proclamations, issued by Dawson and Guise, on behalf of the Paramount Power. According to Phakir Mohan, he could hood-wink Dharanidhar to believe that he was the heir-apparent and that British forces had come to Keonjhar to salute and honour him, and

with this impression he dressed himself in seemingly regal dress and went on horse to meet Dawson.[54] It may also be assumed that at the persuasion of Shashi Bhusan Ray, the Sub-Inspector of Police and Bhagawan Sirdar, Dharanidhar surrendered to Dawson in a dignified way with full knowledge of futility of resistance.

Notes and references

1. Keonjhar was one of the twenty four Princely States which were merged with the province of Orissa after independence. Most of these princely States which were called tributary mahals were looked after by a Superintendent of tributary mahals in the nineteenth Century. Bhuyans and Juangs were the two prominent tribal communities of Keonjhar. Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanjadeo ruled Keonjhar from 1861 to 1905.

2. Dawson, the Superintendent of Police estimated the strength of insurgents to be between 4900 and 6300. The constable who accompanied Shashibhusan Roy, the police sub-inspector and Bhagwan Sirdar who were sent to the rebels' camp by Dawson for negotiation estimated the strength of rebels at 10,000 (See Dawson's Report, Home Public B 1891 August 304-306, National Archives of India (hereafter NAI). Dhanu Amanta a local man of Keonjhar and G.C. Sen, the Manager of Pal Lahara estimated the rebels strength in their camp at Raisua at 20,000. See 612-S Orissa State Archives (Hereafter OSA).

3. Letter from G. Toynbee, Superintendent of Orissa Tributary Mahals to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, dated Bhadrak 29 June 1891. Home Public B 1891 August 304-306, National Archieves of India.

4. Letter from H. Wylly, the Manager of Mayurbhanja to G. Toynbee, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, dated 17 May 1891 (the same file).

5. Letter from Babu Gour Chandra Sen, officiating Manager of Pal Lahara to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, dated 1 June 1899, Pal Lahara (the same file).

6. Letter from Sir John Edgar, Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal to the Secretary, Government of India. Foreign Department, Darjeeling, 20 June 1891, Home Public 1891 B July 58-59 (NAI).

7. Phakir Mohan Senapati, *Atma Jiban Charita* (Oriya). Cuttack 1991, pp.106-7.

8. Refer to no.3.

9. Refer to no.3.

10. Refer to no.3.

11. Refer to no.3.

12. Letter from G.C. Sen, the officiating Manager of Pal Lahara to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, dated 24 May 1891 612-S, OSA.

13. Refer to no.3

14. Refer to no.3 and 12

15. Refer to no.3

16. Refer to no.12

17. Senapati, *Op. Cit*, pp.107-8

18. *Ibid*, p.114

19. Refer to no.3, supplementary judgement.

20. Senapati, *Op. Cit*, P.105.
21. Refer to no.3
22. Senapati, Op. Cit. p.108
23. Refer to no.7
24. Letter from Deputy Commissioner, Singhbhoom to the Commissioner, Orissa Division received on 20 May 1891, 612-S (OSA).
25. Refer to no.3
26. Refer to no.4
27. Refer to no.3, Supplementary Judgement.
28. Ibid
29. Ibid
30. Refer to nos.3 and 24
31. Letter from G. Toynbee, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal (date not available) 612-S (OSA).
32. Refer to no.12
33. Senapati, *Op. Cit,* PP.116-117.
34. Refer to no.7, Dawson's Report.
35. Refer to no.3 Judgement.
36. Refer to no.24.
37. Refer to no.3, Supplmentary Judgement.
38. Letter from G.C. Sen, Officiating Manager, Pal Lahara to the Superintendent, Tributary Mahals, dated 30 May 1891, 612-S (OSA).

39. Refer to no.24
40. Refer to no.12
41. Ibid
42. Refer to no.7
43. Refer to no.12
44. Refer to no.12 and Senapati, *Op. Cit.*
45. Refer to no.7, Dawson's report.
46. Ibid
47. Refer to no.7, Guise's Report.
48. Refer to No.3 Supplementary Judgement.
49. Letter from Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Orissa to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal 16 May 1891, 612-S (OSA).
50. Refer to no.3
51. Refer to No.3, Judgement and Supplementary Judgement.
52. Ibid
53. *Utkal Dipila*, 19 March 1892.
54. Senapati, *Op. Cit.*

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IV

PANDIT GOPABANDHU DAS – THE MAN AND HIS ROLE IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF ORISSA

The name 'Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das' conjures up before any Oriya's mind a simply clad and bearded social activist who sacrificed himself for social services. By his selfless service to the people of Orissa he won their hearts and the admiration of eminent public figures like A.V. Thakkar, C.F. Andrews, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Mahatma Gandhi. Thakkar knew how Gopandhu was neglecting himself and wrote to the latter: "Yes, for God's sake keep regular diet and hours of sleep. You are too valuable to be lost. If you are healthy, you will be better able to serve "[1] Andrews who saw him serving the people in the flood-affected areas observed: "He had absolutely no thought of self when he was helping or serving others. His whole spiritual strength quite evidently and plainly proceeded from his supreme devotion to God. Every morning and evening he kept his worship intact and said his prayers without a break whatever was happening. His love for me was so deep that it would move me to my own heart's depth".[2] Lala Lajpat Rai wrote on his death:

> The Late Pandit Gopabandhu Das was literally a prince among men. It was Mahatma Gandhi's Non-cooperation movement that discovered the man. Even before, he had been devoting his time and money in the service of his people but the organization of Non-Cooperation campaign found him ready to dedicate himself solely and exclusively for the service of his people. He was originally a lawyer by profession and a very successful lawyer too who made a good income out of the practice at the bar.
>
> He gave his all to his people-his body, his purse, his talents, his energy and his soul. With the exception of Mahatma Gandhi himself I have not come across another Indian who was so simply clad as

> Gopabandhu used to be ever since the fateful 1920. The only two pieces of cloth he used were his *dhoti* and his *chaddar*-hand-spun and hand-woven, of course. He had only one dress all the time be it in private or in public, be it in meetings or in courts, in schools or in the Congress Durbar. He was pre-eminently one who lived as he professed- honest, truthful, frank, guileless, simple and unostentatious. Among his people he wielded an influence which was unique. He was the uncrowned king of Orissa. At the time of his death he was not young but by no means was he old too. He enjoyed a perpetual youth, ever willing to work at high pressure to give himself away to the care of the people and to be in the forefront of the battle.[3]

Mahatma Gandhi whom Gopabandhu Das invited to Orissa during the Non-cooperation movement made the following observation on him at his death:

> Pandit Gopabandhu was one of the noblest among the sons of Orissa, the land of sorrows and tears. Gopabandhu Babu had given his all to Orissa. I heard of him and his sterling character and steadfastness when Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar was sent to Orissa in 1919 to distribute relief to the famine-stricken. Sjt. Thakkar used to write to me how Gopabandhu Babu braved inconvenience and disease in struggling to help the helpless. He gave up his practice and his membership of the Legislative Council during the Non-cooperation days and never wavered. What was more for him was to stake the existence of his dearest creation, the Satyabadi School. He braved the taunts of some of his closest friends and persisted to his eternal honour in what they considered to be his folly. His one ambition in life was to see dismembered Utkal united and happy. He had lately become a member of Lala Lajpat Rai's society and was planning to make *Khadi* an efficient vehicle for the economic relief of poverty and flood-stricken Orissa. The country is the poorer for the death of Pandit Gopabandhu Das.[4]

Gopabandhu lived a life of fifty one years. Out of this short span of lie, the last two decades was devoted to public life. As a student in Cuttack and Calcutta he had come in contact with Utkal

Union movement in Orissa and the terrorist movement in Bengal. He entered into public life after passing B.L. from the Calcutta University in 1906. Thereafter he played his role in the public life of Orissa in various capacities, i.e. as a lawyer, an educational experimentist, a legislator a journalist, a leader of the Oriya movement, a social worker relieving the distress of famine-stricken people and finally a nationalist leader.

After passing B.L. from Calcutta University he joined as the Headmaster of the newly established High school in the princely state of Nilgiri. He left it after six months. In 1909 he was appointed as the Government pleader in the princely state of Mayurbhanj, then ruled by Maharaja Shriramachandra Bhanja, who was popular for his progressive and generous outlook and activities. The state was taken over by the Political Department and placed under Court of Wards, when Maharaja Shriramachandra died on 22 February 1912, leaving behing a minor son. Gopabandhu thereafter left Baripada and carried on legal practice first at Cuttack, and then at Puri.

As a lawyer Gopabandhu accepted briefs from such clients whose cases he believed to be just and advised people to desist from litigation and settle matters amicably out of the Court. It is said that he even used to summon both the parties in a case to his residence to strike a compromise between them[5].

Before his departure for Baripada, in August 1909, Gopabandhu had started a Middle English school at Sakhigopal, which was converted into a High English school in 1912. This school later became famous as Satyabadi Grove school (Satyabadi Vana Vidyalaya). The Satyabadi Grove school was different from others in several respects. It had nobler objectives and goals. Its teachers,

recruited by Gopabandhu himself, such as Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godavarish Mishra, Acharya Harihar Das, Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra, Pandit Basudev Mohapatra, and Rama Chandra Rath wre talented and dedicated to the school. They received only "subsistence allowance". The Satyabadi system of education, besides teaching normal curricular subjects, laid stress on teaching agriculture, crafts, dignity of labour, physical exercise, discipline and character-building. Without "expensive" buildings and equipments the teachers and promoters of this school sought to impart "true education" and "the value of discipline and culture-mental, moral and physical". The teachers of the Satyabadi school had a social commitment. Though most of the teachers were themselves Brahmins by caste, they were determined to fight against the orthodoxy of Brahmins in the surrounding villages. The students of all castes were allowed to take meals together in the hostel of the school. The orthodox people reacted to the unorthodox behavior of the teachers of Satyabadi school by setting fire to the school building in 1912. As a result the school lost property worth rupees five thousand, and rare and invaluable books of the school library were burnt.

The Satyabadi school and system of education impressed distinguished visitors like Sir Ashutosh Mookherji, Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa and Mahatma Gandhi. Mookherji admired the spirit of dedication and sacrifice which he saw in the teachers of Satyabdi school and wished "that every village in Bengal should possess a genuine plan of instruction like the Satyabadi school".[6] Mahatma Gandhi regarded the school as "a serious experiment in open-air teaching".[7]

During the Non-cooperation movement Gopabandhu Das converted the Satyabadi school into a national school and refused

to accept a Government grant of Rs.20,000/- for the construction of the school building. It was a pity that he finally closed the Satyabadi national school because of financial difficulties in 1926. This school, however, "created a new consciousness and set a new ideal in Orissa". "It appeared as a revolt against the narrow-minded outlook of the then elite", and it was beyond the power of Gopabandhu Das, a soaring idealist to transform the unfavourable climate, prevailing all around.[8] But the teachers and officials of Satyabadi school such as Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Harihar Das, Lingaraj Mishra, Nanda Kishore Das, Radhanath Rath and Jagannath Rath later played significant roles in the nationalist movement and public life of Orissa.

Gopabandhu was elected to Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council in 1917. As a legislator, he fought with the authorities on such issues as famine relief, flood prevention, manufacture of salt without excise duty and official restriction, opening of more schools by relaxing the rules of education department in respect of the requirements of buildings and apparatus and opening of engineering school at Cuttack, Sanskrit College at Puri, and M.A. and B.L. Classes in the Ravenshaw College. In 1919 there was a severe famine in the Puri district. The government measures for famine relief were inadequate. In the floor of Legislative Council Gopabandhu, therefore fought a battle of words with Mr. Grunning, the Commissioner of Orissa for securing more relief. He even placed before the Council the specimens of food like green leaves, and husk powder with some particles of rice, eaten by the famine-stricken people, and their portrait, drawn on a canvas, by a painter[9]. As a result Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa who was a noble-hearted person visited the famine stricken area and admitted, "what ought to have been done has not been done".[10]

Gait who used to preside over the meetings of Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council admired Gopabandhu and tried to prevent him from joining Gandhi's Non-cooperation, saying "Gopabandhu, can you achieve for your country through all that you succeeded doing by your honest labour in the Council? The work you had begun will simply be ruined. I advise you to continue your good work in the Council. Non-cooperation is not a way for achievement".[11] Gopabandhu, though he considered Gait to be a noble, honest and simple human being, felt that nothing could be gained from cooperation with an "impervious" administrative machinery. He replied, "Do you think any good will come out of cooperation with such a government. Non-cooperation is the way to achievements. If the people dedicate themselves to the task of non-cooperation, and if their heart is filled with strength and power, your government can no longer ignore them. I feel that nothing can be gained by a weak heart".[12] Gopabandhu did not seek re-election to the Legislative Council after joining the Non-cooperation movement.

Gopabandhu Das had been associated with the Utkal Union Conference since his student days. The Oriya movement, the development of Oriya literature and merger of Oriya tracts were very dear to his heart. Over the fourteenth session of Utkal Union Conference, held at Idgha ground in Cuttack town on 19 and 20 April 1919, Gopabandhu Das presided and delivered a powerful speech which moved the audience. In his speech he tried to give a nationalist orientation and outlook to Utkal Union Conference. He said :

> The objectives of the Sammilani are to develop the Oriya nationality which consists of different categories of people residing in natural Orissa accepting it as their own province. Not parochialism but humanism was the goal of Oriya nationalism. Oriya nationalism consists of universal love and fullness of life.

> It is not selfish, lifeless or interested in inactive love. It is not based on desire for conquest or bloodshed. Equality, fraternity and liberty are its watchwords. Orissa does not suffer from pettiness. Orissa's river is called Mahanadi or the Great River, Orissa's sea is Mahodadhi or the Great Sea. Orissa's hill is Mahendra or Great Mountain. Orissa's tree is Kalpabata or the tree of fulfillment, Orissa's Lord is Jagannatha or the Lord of Universe and Orissa's cremation ground is the Swargadwar or the Gate to Heaven. The Oriyya visualizes greatness all around. The Conference is part of India's national movement. To maintain our individuality, we must maintain the foundation of our nationalism, the common people intact. This foundation of the temple of nationalism, the original power, lied imbedded in the villages. There can be no discrimination between great and small in a national movement. In the national endeavour, there is no difference between a Maharaja and a sweeper.[13]

In his presidential speech Gopabandhu stressed the importance of development of agriculture, industry, commerce, literature and education as the foundation of nationalism. He stressed the importance of education and association, the reorganization of the Bhagabat Tungis as the centre of rural development and organization of cooperative societies in the villages. He deplored the negligence of Oriya language in such outlying areas as Ganjam, Midnapore, Vizagapatam, Singhbhum and Raipur. But while emphasizing the development of Oriya language and culture, he wanted a common language for the whole of India. He said "Please remember destruction of Oriya language will mean destruction of Oriya nationalism. The problem of language is now a problem of life and death for us. It will of course be desirable to have one language in the whole of India and if this is done I am prepared to sacrifice Oriya language but so long as this has not been done, the Oriya cannot lose his individuality".[14]

He criticized the British Government for their callousness and indifference towards the Oriya's demand for the merger of Oriya tracts:

> "Not merely in the fields of language but in many other fields the British Government had exhibited indifference and callousness towards our people. Oriyas are loyal people and they show unflinching obedience to the commands of their rulers. The Oriyas have now realized this injustice of their rulers. They have been making repeated appeals for the development of their language and the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking areas but Government have paid no attention to their appeals. They must know that this demand is legitimate and it is necessary to maintain their individuality. We expected that the Monford Reforms will meet our demand but unfortunately these reports speak of a sub-province for Oriyas. They have given no details about it. I have faith in right and justice, and I have also faith in the amalgamation problem. This must be achieved sooner or later".[15]

The presidential speech of Gopabandhu in the Utkal Union Conference, held at Cuttack in April 1919 a few days after the Jalianawallabagh massacre, reflects his leaning towards all-India nationalism. As pointed out by Ramachandra Barik, his servant, after Jalianawallabagh massacre he went to Lucknow and on return, he immersed himself in deep thought for fifteen days, and thereafter threw himself heart and soul into the nationalist movement.[16] In his presidential speech in Utkal Union Conference he had hinted at the necessity of a weekly Oriya newspaper for the education of masses. Since 1913 Gopabandhu had been writing the editorial of weekly paper *Asha* (Hope), brought out from Berhampur by Sashibhusan Rath. From Asha press at Berhampur he brought out a monthly literary journal, called *Satyabadi* which was later on published from Sakhigopal in 1915. He brought out the Oriya weekly paper, titled *Samaj* from Sakhigopal on 4 October 1919. Gopabandhu enunciated the objectives of *Samaj* in the following words:

> The Samaj is published every Week on Saturday from the 'Satyabadi Press'. The condition of the country is discussed in it. It particularly ventilates the grievances of the rural people and dispassionate discussion is made of those problems of the people which the Government ought to know. Again the Government policy and activity are also explained to the people through its columns. Special attention is paid to the problems of health, primary education, religion, Gram Panchayat, cooperative movement, social conditions, agricultures, rural industries and allied matters of the rural people. The language of the *Samaj* is easy and simple and it is easily intelligible to the literate people. Even the illiterate people also can understand it if someone reads it out to them.[17]

The *Samaj* was published from Cuttack in July 1927. It was made a daily paper in April 1930, when Gandhi started his Dandee march for violation of salt laws.

In the fifteenth session of the Utkal Union Conference held at Puri on 28 December 1919, under the chairmanship of Shri Chandrasekhar Behera, the lawyer from Sambalpur an attempt was made to give a nationalist orientation to the Utkal Union Conference. This attempt, like the earlier one of Gopabandhu at Cuttack failed to convert the Utkal Union Conference to the nationalist ideology.

In the issues of *Samaj*, dated 3 and 10 April 1920 Gopabandhu wrote about the celebration of national week, as decided by Mahatma Gandhi from 6 to 13 April 1920, in commemoration of Jalianawallabagh massacre. Towards the end of July he was writing about Gandhi's Non-cooperation programme in *Samaj*. The special session of the Congress, held at Calcutta early in September 1920, adopted Gandhi's Non-cooperation programme. This session was attended by Gopabandhu Das, Jagabandhu Singh, Krupasindhu Mishra, Nilakantha Das, Harekrushna Mahtab and Nanda Kishor Das from Orissa. The

Utkal Dipika described the special session of the Congress, held at Calcutta as "eventful" and "historical" and while expressing inability to appreciate the real worth of Non-cooperation called it the Mahamantra (the sacred formula of salvation) and Mahatma Gandhi "the very incarnation of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation" and the "standard-bearer of a sacred mission".[18] Gopabandhu returned from Calcutta, being firmly committed to the idea of Non-cooperation. He compared the Congress session of Calcutta with the car festival of Lord Jagannath, and Lala Lajpat Rai (the President), Mahatma Gandhi and Mrs. Annie Besant with Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. About Lala Lajpat Rai he observed: "Just as the two eyes of Jagannath glisten, the two eyes of Lajpat had shone with sternness and luster. How courageous, what a shining personality, what an eloquent speaker! He could subdue the large crowd by the strength of his personality. He is a real revolutionary and fearless person".[19]

According to the principle of council boycott, as envisaged in the Non-cooperation programme, Gopabandhu did not seek re-election to Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, when the elections were held in November-December 1920 undr the Government of India Act, 1919.

In December 1920, the annual session of the Congress was held at Nagpur. Simultaneously the Utkal Union Conference was going to hold its annual session at Chakradharpur in the Singhbhum district of Bihar. To enable the Oriya delegates to attend the Congress session at Nagpur as well as Utkal Union Conference session at Chakradharpur, the Utkal Union Conference postponed its meeting to 30 December 1920. The standing committee of the Congress accepted for consideration in the Nagpur session the proposal from Orissa to have a separate provincial Congress committee for Oriya

speaking tracts on linguistic basis.[20] In view of such a gesture of the Congress there was a proposal in *Utkal Dipika* that the Congress should accept the Utkal Union Conference as the Orissa branch of the Indian National Congress.[21] At this stage Madhusudan Das was requested by the organisers of the Chakradharpur session of Utkal Union Conference to preside over it. But having been elected to the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council under the Government of India Act, 1919 and realizing how Non-cooperation idea had appealed to many in the Utkal Union Conference, Madhusudan declined the offer. Braja Sundar Das, another stalwart of the Conference also declined the offer. Finally Jagabandhu Singh, the lawyer of Puri and an associate of Gopabandhu Das accepted the offer.

The Nagpur Congress was attended by 27 delegates from Orissa, among whom there were 21 delegates from Puri district Congress Committee, organized by Gopabandhu Das himself. The Nagpur Congress finally passed the resolution on Non-cooperation, and while deciding to have provincial Congress committees on linguistic basis, allowed the Oriya-speaking tracts to have a separate provincial Congress Committee. Gopabandhu Das, along with others, came from Nagpur to attend the Chakradharpur session of Utkal Union Conference, held from 30 December 1920 to 1 January 1921. Though Jagabandhu Singh presided over the Utkal Union Conference at Chakradharpur, yet it was Gopabandhu who dominated the Conference. On the opening day of the Conference Jagabandhu Singh suggested that as the National Congress had allowed the Oriyas to form a provincial committee for themselves, the people of Orissa should join the Congress and present their case in its forum. On the second day of the Conference Gopabandhu moved the resolution "that the aims and objects of the Indian National Congress be accepted as those of Utkal Union Conference

in addition to the accepted objectives of the Conference".[22] The resolution was firmly opposed by a minority in the meeting. Braja Sundar Das, the most vocal of them opposed the resolution on the ground that it was contrary to the fundamental objective of the Utkal Union Conference. He held that the acceptance of the Congress ideals by the Utkal Union Conference would be detrimental to the cause of Oriya nationalism. Those who wanted to propagate Congress ideals in Orissa, he argued, could do so through Congress Committees in the districts without affecting Utkal Union Conference. Nevertheless Gopabandhu's resolution was passed by the overwhelming majority in the Conference. Another resolution, passed on the second day of the Conference supported the decision of all India Congress Committee to form provincial Congress Committee on linguistic basis.

After the Chakradharpur session of the Utkal Union Conference it was the Congress, not the Utkal Union Conference which dominated the political scene in Orissa. Those who subscribed to the Congress ideology and programme withdrew from Utkal Union Conference and tried to work simultaneously for the cause of Indian nationalism (*Swaraj Prapti*), and amalgamation of the Oriya tracts (*Deshamishrana*) through the Congress. Hereafter Utkal Union Conference remained in the hands of the moderates i.e. those who believed in cooperation or collaboration with the Government.

1920 was a turning point in the public life of Orissa and Gopabandhu's career. For about fifty years the Oriyas had striven for the development of their language as well as the merger of their tracts. In 1903 Madhusudan Das had given a definite direction to the Oriya movement by organizing Utkal Unionn Conference. The protagonists of Utkal Union Conference hoped for achieving their

goal through collaboration with the Government. Early in the present century, the then Viceroy Lord Curzon, who had been criticized as an imperialist, was sympathetic towards the Oriyas' cause, and tried to do something for the merger of Oriya tracts. In 1912 the artificial province of Bihar and Orissa, which did not include all Oriya tracts was formed. Montague-Chelmsford report recommended a sub-province for Oriyas, but no definite provision was made in the Government of India Act, 1919 for the creation of the sub-province. Consequently the Oriyas were disillusioned with the British authorities, and the loyalist, collaborationist and elitist Utkal Union Conference by 1919-1920. At that time all-India nationalism with mass upsurge was emerging under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Gopabandhu wanted to merge Orissa in the mainstream.

The protagonists of Oriya movement persisted in their argument that the cause of Oriyas would suffer if Oriyas joined the Congress. Towards the end of March 1923 the seventeenth session of the Utkal Union Conference was held at Berhampur under the presidentship of Kalpataru Das, the lawyer-zamindar of Cuttack. This session was attended by Congressmen like Gopabadhu Chaudhury, Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Jagabandhu Singh, Godabarish Mishra and Krupasindhu Mishra.

In January 1924 Gopabandhu Chaudhury invited the Utkal Union Conference to hold its next session at Cuttack. But in March he decided to dissociate himself from the Utkal Union Conference. In his letter to the editor of *Utkal Dipika* he put forward two reasons for his dissociation from Utkal Union Conference : first he felt that the unification of Oriya tracts was not possible through the methods of prayer and petition which were being followed by the Utkal Union Conference ; secondly, as the unification of Oriya tracts was possible through the Congress organization and by means of its

agitational methods, he did not consider it wise to divide the strength of people into two organizations, i.e., Congress and Utkal Union Conference.[23] Actually the Utkal Union Conference was in the hands of loyalists and moderates who did not want to submerge their identity in the Congress and with whom the Congressmen found it difficult to have truck. As Niranjan Pattanayak, a champion of the Oriya movement as well as a Congressman pointed out, it was impossible for the Non-cooperators who had chosen the path of suffering to have truck with those who had not got rid of the habit of prayer, petition and appeasement.[24]

Gopabandhu Das viewed the issue of Congress versus Oriya movement at a higher plane than many others. To him the goal of *Swaraj*, as envisaged by the Congress was higher and nobler than the cause of Oriya movement. He considered Oriyas' interests worth-sacrificing for the cause of Indian nationalism. He also wrote in his mouthpiece *Satyabadi*-:

"No one can definitely say what is the extent of danger in any movement. It may be that Orissa may lose her identity altogether as a result of the national movement and we must be prepared for it. If obliteration of Orissa can save Indian nationalism, is it not desirable? It will rather be a stroke of good fortune for Orissa. People may not appreciate this sacrifice of Orissa; still Dadhichi's sacrifice remains very noble".[25]

At a relatively pragmatic level Gopabandhu considered it wiser to secure the merger of Oriya tracts through the support of Indian public opinion, as expressed in Congress than through the support of the colonial authorities. He wrote in *Samaj*, dated 27 May 1922:

"In fact for the merger of Oriya tracts the support of Indian public opinion is more essential than Government help. Any movement which lacks the sanction of strong popular will is doomed to failure. ....Congress is the Government for the Congressmen of Orissa. They should not look to the British authorities in any matter. Hence any decision of the Congress regarding merger of Oriya tracts would be accepted by them as final".[26]

Both Gopabandhu Das and Gopabandhu Chaudhury considered Utkal Union Conference a redundant organization in view of the supposedly inherent ineffectiveness of the Utkal Union Conference and the Congress recognition of Orissa as a separate entity. While Gopabandhu Das was in jail, Gopabandhu Chaudhury made arrangement for an all-Orissa provincial conference, committed to the goal of Congress and merger of Oriya tracts. This conference was held at Cuttack on 28-29 June 1924 under the chairmanhip of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, the patriot-scientist of Bengal. Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra (the President and Secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee respectively) attended the Conference on release from Hazaribagh jail. Impressed by the spontaneous warmth and ovation, given by the people to Gopabandhu in the Conference, the chairman Ray conferred on him the title of Utkalmani (the jewel of Orissa). This Conference passed resolutions in favour of Gandhi's Non-cooperation and merger of Oriya tracts. Gopabandhu Das justified the organization of such a conference initiated by Gopabandhu Chaudhury. He observed in the second session of this Conference, held at Bolgarh towards the close of November 1925:"

> I was an adherent of the old Utkal Union Conference. I have joined it from the beginning and have got the honour of presiding over it. The Conference came to such a pass that its further existence became redundant. I consider this provincial Conference as the

> transformation of the earlier Conference. The earlier Conference is not dead but transformed. Public institutions are born and transformed according to the needs of the country, people and time. Nobody should regret for that. I hope that the people of different classes and shades of opinion in Orissa will understand this whole-heartedly and join this provincial Conference... There is dearth of men of calibre in Orissa. Our strength is feeble. If some people dissociate themselves (from this Conference), the development of the nation (Oriyas) will be retarded.[27]

After the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress, the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee was formed with Gopabandhu Das as the President. At Gopabandhu's invitation Gandhi came to Orissa in March 1921 and addressed the public at Cuttack, Bhadrak, Puri and Berhampur. As the harbinger of the Gandhian Congress movement in Orissa, Gopabandhu tried to implement the Congress party's programme of enrolment of Congressmen, raising of subscriptions for the Tilak Swaraj fund and promotion of khadar.

The Non-cooperation movement roused an unprecedented political stir in Orissa. The extensive lecture tours of Gopabandhu Das and his associates and writings in *Utkal Dipika* and *Samaj* made the common people aware of the Congress programme and roused their political consciousness. The Non-cooperation movement touched the common men unlike the movement of Utkal Union Conference which was essentially a discussion forum of the elite class. There were numerous instances of common people's involvement in the implementation of Non-cooperation programme. National schools were established. Foreign goods were boycotted in a number of places. Many gave up intoxicants. Private arbitration courts were successful in some places. Thousands of spinning wheels were used in the villages. Gopabandhu was successful in involving common people like the Oriya labourers of Calcutta (who helped in

the boycott of foreign goods) in the Non-cooperation movement. Nearly two hundred persons were jailed in Orissa during the Non-cooperation movement. By the end of 1921, fifty two thousand Congressmen had been enrolled in Orissa. The raising of subscriptions and funds however remained a problem. While Orissa contributed only Rs.6,000/- to A.I.C.C. out of Rs.24,000/- proposed to be raised for the Tilak Swaraj Fund by the end of 1921, during this period U.P.C.C. got Rs.60,000/- from the A.I.C.C. On the whole, the achievements of the Non-cooperation movement in Orissa were short-lived and far below the target, fixed by A.I.C.C. and the mobilization of the common people as well as the intelligentsia for the movement was far from being perfect. That is why Gopabandhu rightly noted that the public life of Orissa had remained essentially dull. He observed :

"Practically no lawyer had relinquished legal practice. Well-known public leaders took care of their personal interests at opportune moments. The attachment to the Government service has not yet gone. The students of schools and colleges have not been able to abjure selfishness".[28]

Gopabandhu identified himself with the masses and tried to bridge the gap between the intelligentsia and masses. His sympathy for the tenants of Kanika Zamindari who were being oppressed by the Zamindar and the police during and after the Non-cooperation movement ultimately resulted in his imprisonment for two years after trial under the Criminal Law Amendment Act which took place on 26 June 1922.

In the post-Non-cooperation period Gopabandhu concentrated himself on constructive work without seeking entry into the Council. Of course on the controversy between the pro-

changers who sought entry into the Council, and no-chargers who remained firm on boycott, he did not commit himself to either side.[29] In 1926, to render relief to the flood-affected people in Brahmagiri, Kanas and Chaubiskud areas of the Puri district he opened a number of spinning centres. The spinners were paid good wages. The cloths woven out of the yearns were sold, and the sale proceeds were invested in further spinning. It was a great success. The same year he joined Lala Lajpat Rai's Servants of the People Society, and opened a Widows' Home at Puri to provide education to helpless widows and train them in the means of earning livelihood. In July 1927, assisted by Lingaraj Mishra, he proceeded to give relief to the people, affected by flood in the Baitarani, Subarnarekha and Budhabalang rivers.

In April 1928 Gopabandhu attended the annual session of the Servants of the People Society at Lahore. On return from this meeting, he was attacked by typhoid. He recovered after twenty five days. Early in June 1928 he went to Calcutta supervise the Labour Union of Oriyas. After return from Calcutta he had a relapse of fever. On 17 June 1928 he passed away at the age of fifty one on account of having neglected his health for public work.

Gopabandhu did not live through the entire period of Gandhian movement for *Swaraj*. He could not see the fulfillment of his dream of Utkal united and happy and India free and prosperous. His untimely death was viewed as a public misfortune in Orissa. Later on while preparing the Orissa Congress for Civil Disobedience Movement of Mahatma Gandhi, Gopabandhu Chaudhury paid the following tribute to Gopabandhu Das in the third session of Utkal Provincial Conference, held at Balasore towards the end of March 1929:

"This Conference today feels a great sense of void in the absence of Pandit Gopabandhu Das, the pioneer of Congress movement in Orissa, now in heaven".[30]

Gopabandhu's paradigm that the amalgamation of Oriya tracts can be better achieved through the support of Congress than through collaboration with the Government, the line pursued by Madhusudan proved to be a day-dream. The Nehru Committee, appointed by the all-parties Conference in 1928, did not make any recommendation for the creation of the Orissa Province. It only recorded the dissenting view of Subhas Chandra Bose that a separate province of Orissa might be formed, provided it was found financially viable. In the Congress session, held at Calcutta in December 1928, the President Motilal Nehru did not allow any discussion on the issue of amalgamation of Oriya tracts, when the same was raised by Niranjan Pattanayak[31]. In protest the Oriya delegates, nearly 300 in number, walked out of the meeting under the leadership of Nilakantha Das, and held a protest meeting against the offensive behaviour and ruling of Motila Nehru.[32] Commenting on this matter *Utkal Dipika* observed:

"The Oriyas cannot ameliorate their condition either by appealing to the Government or by denouncing the Government as the supporters of Congress. As long as they have not been able to stand on their own feet, wherever they go, they will face only humiliation".[33]

By merging Orissa in the Congress mainstream Gopabandhu enabled Oriyas to live up to the ideal of *Sarbesam no Janani Bharat* (India is the mother of all of us). But his expectation of help from the Congress for the merger of Oriya tracts was unrealistic. Was not the Congress basically a coalescence of various regional political

groups, united under the banner of anti-imperialism? Were not the Oriyas a hopeless minority in it with no politico-constitutional identity of their own?

In his presidential address to the Utkal Union Conference, held in April 1919 at Cuttack Gopabandhu observed:

"It should be remembered that we are human beings, first and foremost, then Indians, and Oriyas last. Without this notion in mind national evolution is impossible. Every individual has his individuality, but that individuality cannot grow without a social base. Similarly Orissa's identity can manifest itself in the wider field of Indian nationalism and through universal and liberal humanitarianism".[34]

In fact, however, the last and first of his priorities i.e. the Oriya identity consciousness and universal and liberal humanitarianism paralleled or perhaps outweighed his second priority, i.e. his commitment to all-India nationalism. While introducing Mahatma Gandhi to the people of Orissa in the Kathajuri river-bed meeting, held in March 1921, Gopabandhu appealed to them "to imbibe the message of Gandhiji in full recollection of the ancient glories and catholicity of the Oriya people".[35] His deep attachment to Orissan culture and tradition and his humanitarian outlook were reflected in his poems, writings in the *Samaja*, and activities as a social activist. He was devoted to Lord Jaganath and well-versed in Jagannath Das's *Bhagabat,* the national Bible of Orissa. He attached importance to the Bhagabat Tungis in the villages and thought of reorganizing them for the promotion of the real uplift of the villages. His sympathy for fellow human beings was reflected in his activities for the people, distressed by flood, and famine. At the time of natural calamities, when hunger and privation make man

inhuman, he appeared before the people with relief like a divine angel. He practised the philosophy of altruistic hedonism, the philosophy which preaches that real pleasure lies not in pursuit of self interest but in selfless service to humanity. Pained by the attribution of deception to his gestures of love by a life-long friend, he asked in a poem titled "Vyathita Pranara Antima Ashru" (Last Tears of a Grieved Soul):

> Is life a desert of pessimism
> and love and affection a mere
> mirage in that desent?
> If it is so, tell me, what for
> do people die for others in this world?[36]

Certainly, despite human frailties, Gopabandhu lived and died for others. Would it not have been better, had he lived longer with greater discipline and reserve?

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22. Quoted in Dash, *op.cit.*, p.97.
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25. Quoted in Dash, *op.cit.,* p.87.
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28. *Ibid.*, 8 September 1921.
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V

THE KANIKA TENANTS' AGITATION {1921-22}

The agitation of the Kanika tenants in 1921-22 is a significant episode in the history of Non-Cooperation Movement in Orissa. Though the local agrarian grievance constituted the background and content of the agitation, yet it was directly and indirectly stimulated by the Congress Non-cooperators. For tactical reasons, later on, the Orissa Congress leaders professed to treat it as a local agrarian agitation; yet its links with the nationalist movement in Orissa cannot be denied. It was an agitation against the Raja of Kanika, who was a staunch loyalist and an opponent of the Non-Cooperation Movement. The agitation was stimulated by the Congress activists because of the Raja's open condemnation of the Non-Cooperation Movement. So long as the Non-Cooperation Movement was going on, the Kanika agitation was regarded by the Orissa Congressmen as a part of the anti-imperialist movement.

Kanika was a permanently settled Zamindari estate of about 440 square miles in area, situated in the Cuttack and Balasore districts The Cuttack portion, known as Chhamuka, was 260 square miles in area. The Balasore portion was known as Panchmuka. The rivers Vaitarani and Dhamra constituted the natural dividing lines between the Cuttack and Balasore portions. The economic condition of the Kanika tenants was miserable because of frequent failures of crops, caused by climatic abnormalities and feudal exploitation. The people had to live in continuous fear of cyclones, sea waves, floods and drought, till harvesting.

At the time of Non-cooperation movement Rajendra Narayan

Bhanjadeo was the Raja (or Zamindar) of Kanika. He bad been born in 1885 in the family of the Zamindar of the adjoining estate of AuI. He was subsequently adopted by the childless widowed Rani of Kanika, Krushnapriya Patamahadei. Rajendra. Narayan Bhanja deo was well-educated. He received his apprenticeship in politics from Madhusudan Das. He assumed the charge of Zamindari on attaining adulthood in 1902. With Madhusudan's patronage he could make his mark in the public life of Orissa within a short span of time. He became a stalwart of the Utkal Union Conference and presided over its annual session in 1906. In 1907 he visited England. In 1910 he became a membe:r of Bengal Legislative Council. In 1912 he became a member of Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council. In 1922 he was made a member of Bihar and Orissa Executive Council. But in spite of his enlightenment and role in the public life of Orissa Rajendra Narayan Bhanjadeo could not do away with feudal exploitation within his own estate. Besides feudal exactions, another reason for which he incurred general displeasure was his loyalistic attitude which he maintained at a time when the Non-cooperation movement was being carried on by the Congress. Consequently the agrarian grievanee and infiltration of Non-cooperation ideas caused a mass agitation in his estate both against himself and British Government.

There was a strong background of agrarian grievance behind the mobilization of the people of Kanika during the Non-cooperation movement. The tenants had no security of tenure and could be evicted at will by the Raja. The protective provisions of the Orissa. Tenancy Act of 1911 were practicnlly insufficient to safeguard the tenants' occupancy rights, Besides land revenue the tenants had to pay numerous other charges (popularly called *Chausathi Kar* i, e., sixty four cesses). Forced labour was prevalent in Kanika as in the

case of princely states. The agrarian grievance had forged a *Meli* habit, i. e., a tendency to form combinations against the Raja. In such combinations the *Mustagirs* (i. e., those farmers who had been vested with the right of collecting revenue) played leading roles. (In 1894 the Mustagirs were deprived of the right to collect revenue because of the introduction of Khas management). According to the official view, the *Mustagirs* were a cause of nuisance to the Zamindar as well as tenants; they collected rent from the tenants in an oppressive manner aad tried to misappropriate the same. " As natural leaders of tenants", said Mc Pherson, the Home Member of Bihar and Orissa Executive Council, "the *Mustagirs* are mischievous and as collectors of rent from tenants oppressive and unscrupulous".[1]

Ostensibly, the Kanika tenants' agitation of 1921-22 was caused by the enhancement of land revenue and jungle tax through a private settlement, enforced since 1916. In 1894 a land settlement had been completed by Sakhawat Husain, resulting in a substantial increase of revenue. Long before the expiry of the thirty years' period after this settlement, the Raja of Kanika raised the revenue by a private settlement under the compromise provision (Section 137) of the Orissa Tenancy Act. The tenants willy nilly paid the enhanced rent instead of protesting. In 1918-19 there was an acute scarcity of food stuff in Kanika. In 1920 crops were destroyed by heavy flood. At that time, on the plea of preventing scarcity of food stuff, being authorised by the government the Raja purchased stocks of paddy from the tenants and sold the same at higher rates.[2] The rich tenants who had already been adversely affected by the enhancement of rent further resented the collection of paddy from them by the Raja. At this stage the commencement of Non-cooperation movement by the Congress emboldened the discontented tenants to refuse the payment of rent at enhanced rates But for the Non-

cooperation movement the Kanika tenants could not have probably mustered courage to refuse the payment of enhanced rent. According to Prafulla Das, a local scholar of Kanika, who has attempted an indepth study of the Kanika agitation, by the middle of 1921, under the leadership of Dinabandhu Khandayat Ray, (a member of a *Mustagir* family, who had played a leading part in the *Meli* of 1906) some rich tenants had decided to refuse such payment at enhanced rate,[3].

Till Ramdas Babaji's entry into Kanika in the third week of August 1921, the contagion of Non-cooperation did not touch the people of Kanika. In July 1921, addressing a meeting of the tenants at Raj Kanika, the Raja of Kanika condemned the Non-cooperation movement and congratulated his tenants for not being influenced by the Non-cooperation movement.[4] According to the official report there was no agrarian discontent before the entry of Non-cooperators into Kanika and it was the Non-cooperators who "worked up" "certain agrarian matter" into "grievances".[5]

Ramdas Babaji, a native of the princely state of Tigiria was a revolutionary in the garb of a *Sadhu.* He was "a firebrand, a passionate speaker with a vulgar tongue"[6]. On 15 August 1921 Ramdas began preaching Non-cooperation ideas in Aul, the adjoining estate of Kanika, belonging to the brother of the Raja of Kanika.[7] The two brothers had a strained relation. The two differed in their attitudes towards the British Government. While the Raja of Kanika was a staunch loyalist, a protege of the British Government, the Raja of Aul was bitter against the British Government as his estate was under Court of Wards management. In his speech at Aul, Ramdas "bestowed plenty of praise" on the Raja of Aul and denounced the Raja of Kanika as "a creature of the Satanic Sarkar". He urged the people of Aul not to recognize the Court of Wards.[8]

To the Non-cooperators like Ramdas Babaji, the statement of the Raja of Kanika in July 1921 was a challenge. In the third week of August 1921 Ramdas entered Kanika and began his fiery propaganda against the Raja of Kanika and the British Government. Addressing the tenants of Kanika he said: "The Raja and British Government have been united. Hence adopt the policy of complete non-cooperation towards the Raja. Do not pay tax Do not go to Raja's *kutchery*. Do not receive slavish education in the Raja's school. The employees of Raja should resign from their jobs, and preach the message of *Swarajya.* Everybody should become a four-anna member of the Congress. Let the spinning wheel be run in every home. Wear self-spun cloth and eat home-ground rice. Let the slogans of "victory to Mahatma Gandhi" fill the whole atmosphere of Kanika. Mahatma Gandhi has assured us that *Swaraj* will come within a year"[9]. The propaganda of Ramdas had an electrifying effect on the people of Kanika. It marked the beginning of Congress Organization and nationalist movement in Kanika. Being influenced by Ramdas Babaji's exciting speeches six students of Raj Kanika High school left the school. Attempts were made to establish a national school. A Swaraj Ashram was established at Kantapara, about half a mile away from Raj Kanika. A *Swaraj Yajna* was held and a Swaraj flag was hoisted on a tree, named as Gandhibata. Non-cooperation songs and *kirtans* were sung for sometime. Ramdas Babaji was followed by other Congress activists. Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the Secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Cammittee and his wife Sarala Devi, Jadumani Mangaraj, Dr. Ekram Rosul and Madhusudan Pattanayak (the Non-cooperator from the princely state of Tigiria) carried on their propaganda and activities in Kanika. The local agitators— Ananda Chandra Jena (a primary school teacher, who had been removed from his job for his criticism of the Zamindar) Joyram Rai (a teacher of the Raj Kanika High School

who had been dismissed from his job for taking part in the Non-cooperation movement) and Upendra Subudhiray (an employee of the Raja, who had resigned from his post for joining the Non-cooperation movement) became active to organize the Congress movement in Kanika. Arbitration Sabhas and circle Sabhas were formed and villagers were enrolled in the Congress. In January 1922 a Mahasabha or Supreme Association was formed at Ayatan by Ananda Chandra Jena, Joyram Rai and Dinabandhu Khandaitaray.[10]

By the end of September 1921 Ramdas Babaji was arrestect[11] He was prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment for one year. During his trial he made the following statement before the Court. "The sinful oppressive government which has been ruling over India for 200 years has ruined us. Do not trust this sinful Satanic Government. The Raja of Kanika is a creature of this Satanic Government and he has been opposing and oppressing Non-cooperation in various ways. If you are really Hindus and have the blood of Aryans, do not be deceived by the Satanic Government. They are swindlers"[12].

Ramdas Babaji's arrest intensifed popular agitation. On the day of his arrest Jadumani Mangaraj came to Kanika and gave a speech, warning the Raja of Kanika against the consequences of Ramdas Babaji's arrest. Mangaraj predicted that one of the consequences would be non-payment of rent.[13] The Kanika agitators hereafter became inclined to adopt non-payment of enhanced rent as the main technique of their agitation against the Raja as well as the British Government. AccordIng to the official report, the seditious propaganda among the ignorant royats that British rule would soon come to an end and no rents would be payable under *Swaraj* made the people courageous enough to refuse the payment of rent.[14]

To carry on the agitation for non-payment of rent. a *Meli* was organized for one hundred villages and 4000 villegers were enrolled in it. The organizers of *Meli* established a regular council wlth office-bearers at the village Meghpur.[15] Towards the end of 1921 a meeting of thousands of tenants from Chhamuka, Panchmuka and Kerada was held at Raj Kanika. In that meeting Dinabandhu Khandayatray, the Chamuka tenant leader, Nidhi Tripathy, the Panchmuka tenant leader and Biswanath Rout, the Kerada tenant leader urged the people not to pay rent at the enhanced rate.[16] As the tenants contemplated non-payment of rent at enhanced rates. the Raja obtained from the authorities the power of revenue collection through the certificate procedure in December 1921. At that time Chakradhar Behera, the accountant of Raja of Kanika resigned from his service, protesting against the Raja's anti-tenant policy. Behera, an educated young man who had passed matriculation from the Bhadrak High School being placed in the first division soon emerged as a leader of the tenants in Panchmuka. On 2 January 1922 Chakradhar Behera organized a meeting of tenants at Megha Nuagan.[17] The next day the first meeting of tenants was held under the auspices of the Congress at Ayatan. The meeting was addressed by Madhusudan Pattanayak, the Congress activist from Tigiria, and lecal tenant leaders such as Anand Chandra Jena, Dinabandhu Khandayatray, Punyananda Routroy, Sadashiva Rasikray and Lambodar Mahapatra took active parts in this meeting. The meeting resolved not to pay rent at enhanced rate and Chaukidari tax to the Raja of Kanika and the British authorities respectively.[18]

By the beginning of 1922 village committees of tenants were formed in Kanika to work for the local agrarian cause as well as implementation of the Congress programme. The village commttees discharged the following functions enrolment of Congressmen,

promotion of *Khadar*, settlement of disputes through arbitration, persuading the people not to pay enhanced rent and Chaukidari tax and social boycott of the loyalists. By the beginning of 1922 the local agrarian movement and Congress movement were going on hand in hand, each helping the other. A kind of symbiosis was established between the two movements This is quite evident from a pamphlet, written by Harekrushna Mahtab, which was distributed in February 1922 The pamphlet reads. "The Kanika Sarkar thinks that he will obstruct the waves of the Non-cooperation movement by stretching out his hand. But be it remembered that the awakening of the people, caused by the Non-cooperation Movement will lower the head not only of the Kanika Sarkar but also of the Delhi Sarkar. Now we are awakened. Let the faint light of the awakening be kept up in our hearts. Eventually it will spread like wild fire, grow furious and serve as a guide to many countries"[19].

In February 1922, in response to a petition from 5000 tenants of Kanika, B. N. Ray, the collector of Cuttack conducted an inquiry to ascertain to what extent the rents had actually been raised and whether the enhancement was justifiable. After inquiry the collector reported that in the Chhamuka area the rents had been raised in 1916 by an amicable arrangement with the principal tenants and that all taxes such as land rent, forest cess and pasturage due were reasonable and legally justifiable, The collector B, N, Ray tried to bring about an amicable settlement and advised the tenants "to pay into court such dues as were undisputed and to leave the Raja to maintain in the courts the rights which he claimed and which they denied"[20]: Ray was soon transferred probably because of his sympathetic attitude towards the tenants.[21]

At this stage the tenants' organisation decided that those who wanted to pay rents could deposit their rents at the earlier *(Savak)*

rates in the Kendrapara Government treasury, but in any case they should not pay rents to the Raja. Acording to Lambodar Mahapatra's diary the tenants deposited Rs. 1000 /- at *Savak* rates in the Kendrapada Government treasury.[22]

The suspension of the Non-cooperation movement by the Congress in February 1922 came a blow to the Kanika agitation. The Kanika agitation has started as a result of direct and indirect inspiration and guidance from the Orissa Congress leaders, and both Kanika tenant leaders as well as Orissa Congressmen had regarded the agitation against the Raja of Kanika as a part of the nationalist movement. The suspension of the Congress agitation and lack of any plan of the Congress to espouse the agrarian movement resulted in depriving the Kanika agrarian agitation of the active support from Orissa Congress leaders, which had been extended during the course of the Non-cooperation movement.

Nevertheless the tenants continued their agitation in their cwn style. As they had not been indoctrinated in the non-violent Non-cooperation of Gandhi, they took recourse to violent methods, On 18 April 1922, when three peons of the Raja came to Patrapur to serve notice on some judgement debtors, a mob of 400 tenants assaulted them,[23] After this assault, the Inspector of Police of Kanika arrested five accused persons under sectioh 147 of IPC, But the arrested were rescued by a mob of 2000 peple.[24] Soon Rai Bahadur Shrikrushna Mahapatra, the Superintendent of Police proceeded from Cuttack with 24 armed policemen to suppress the excited tenants. On 23 April 1922 the armed palicemen fired upon an excited mob of ' 1000 persons at Patrapur, killing two persons (Bishuni Madhual and Basu Sethi) and injuring 26 others,[25] Next the police created a reign of terror among the people of Kanika, About their oppression on the people of Kanika H. K. Mahtab has given the

following description in his book *Dasha Varshara Odissa.*

"Armed policemen were sent from Cuttack to suppress the Kanika tenants. The way they tortured the people would make one shudder today. Houses were robbed. Cash and ornaments were taken away. People were mercilessly beaten. Housewives were insulted. In a house while the husband was tied up, his wife was molested before him. A pregnant woman fled to the forest where she delivered her child, to be devoured by the jackals. Property worth about twenty lakhs of rupees was looted."[26] About 150 people, arrested for their association with the tenant's agitation, were made to walk with handcuffs on from Chhamuka through Panchmuka and Bhadrak to Cuttack for terrorising the people. From Cuttack the accused persons were brought to Raj Kanika for trial. 126 persons were jailed.[27] The people could not get fair trial, as the trial took place in Raj Kanika and no lawyer came forward to plead for the accused tenants in Raj Kanika because of fear for the Raja of Kanika[28].' For six months an additional police force was posted in Kanika to prevent the recrudescence of disturbances.[29]

The Raja imposed upon his tenants a collective fine of Rs. 10,000. He evicted a number of tenants on the ground of non-payment of rent. Consequently a number of tenants, some of whom owned hundreds of acres of land, became street beggars.

The Raja of Kanika and the British authorities wholly co-operated with each other in suppressing the tenants. Any statements against the Raja of Kanika was considered by the authorities as high treason.[30]

The Government thoroughly suppressed the tenants and took all possible steps to prevent the intervention of the Congress leaders in the Kanika affairs. It may be noted here that after the suspension

of the Non-cooperation movement the Orissa Congress leaders changed their stand on Kanika affairs. While earlier they had regarded the Kanika tenants' agitation against their Raja as a part of the Non-cooperation movement, later they treated it as a local agrarian issue, a dispute between the Raja and his tenants. and criticized the oppression on the tenants In the later stage, instead of taking side with tenants, which the Congressmen had earlier done, they wanted an impartial inquiry and an amicable settlement between the Raja and his tenants. The following extract from Gopabandhu Das's statement in *Samaj,* dated 20 May. 1922 shows the Congressmen's stand on Kanika affairs at that time:

"We are not parties to the quarrels and law suits between the Raja and his tenants. No dispute can be settled through the court decisions. A commitee of inquiry may find out the truth but cannot bring about compromise between the Raja and tenants. Let bygones be bygones' We wish an amicable union between the Raja and his tenants". Obviously the Congressmen disowned their earlier involvement in Kanika affairs. H. K. Mahtab has assigned two reasons for this change of Orissa Congress leaders' policy on Kanika affairs; first, in 1920's "the tenants' movement was not a part of the Congress programme"; secondly, "in order to protect the people from Government repression as a tactical move it was necessary to make it plain to all concerned that Kanika agitation was agrarian".[31]

But in spite of this change of policy the Government was apprehensive of the dangerous implications of the Orissa Congress leaders' sympathy for the Kanika tenants and their criticism of the atrocities in Kanika. Gopabandhu criticized the Kanika atrocities in the *Samaj.* The Congress leader Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya visited Kanika to gather informations about the atrocities and revealed them to the wider public. The Government, therefore, adopted

precautionary measures for preventing the involvement of the Congress leaders in Kanika affairs. In Cuttack and Bhadrak section 144 was clamped to prevent the holding of any meeting on Kanika affairs. On 14 May 1922, the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee held a meeting at Balasore. This meeting passed a resolution, which was moved by Gopabandhu Das, demanding an impartial inquiry into the atrocities in Kanika.

On 16 May 1922 Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra arrived at Bhadrak to attend the Balasore district conference. As soon as they got down from the train, section 144 was served on them. Nevertheless, they held a meeting within the compound of a mosque. Gopabandhu delivered a very appealing speech in this meeting. The meeting passed a resolution, moved by H. K. Mahtab, condemning the Kanika firing.

After returning from Bhadrak, Gopabandhu wrote in the *Samaj* on 20 May 1922 that the meeting of the U. P. C. C. at Balasore had made it clear that the Non-cooperators had no connection with the Kanika disturbance and that what the U. P. C. C. wanted was an impartiai inquiry into Kanika affairs. But as Gopabandhu and other Congress leaders were soon arrested, it could not be possible for them to do anything on Kanika affairs. The Raja of Kanika filed a number of defamation cases against Gopabandhu for his statements in the *Samaj* about the oppression in Kanika. A case was also filed against him by the Government for his violation of section 144 at Bhadrak. The District Magistrate of Cuttack issued a warrant of arrest to him under section 17 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act for the organization of Swaraj Volunteer Corps. Gopabandhu was arrested on 31 May 1922 at Puri. In the trial that took place in Cuttack on 26 June 1922 he was sentenced to two years' simple imprisonment. At first he remained

in Cuttack jail, and was afterwards transferred to the Hazaribagh jail. Though Gopabandhu was sent to jail, his heart remained stuck on Kanika. While giving his parting message for the countrymen through Niranjan Pattanayak after his arrest on 31 May 1922, Gopabandhu said that behind his arrest there was a sinister motive of the Government, i. e , to prevent him from pursuing the U P. C. C.'s resolution, demanding inquiry into Kanika atrocities, He expected that the countrymen should insist on inquiry into Kanika atrocities.[32] Inside the Hazaribag jail he wrote his poem *Bandira Atmakathe* (the Memoirs of a Prisoner) in which he depicted the suffering of the Kanika tenants. He wrote :

"Rending through fields and forests,
and echoing through the
water of the Salandi.
the pathetic cries of distressed Kanika
ring in my ears
x x x
Had I the wings of a bird
I could fly and see the
Kanika tenants in their
empty and broken houses

In the meantime other Congress leaders - Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Ekram Rosul, Atal Bihari Acharya, Nilakantha Das, Jadumani Mangaraj, Gobinda Chandra Mishra, Ananta Mishra, Harekrushna Mahtab and Niranjan Pattanayak were sentenced to imprisonment.

While the people of Kanika were suffering, a poem, titled *Dukhini Kanika* (Distressed Kanika), written by Ananda Chandra Jena was published. This poem contained a vivid description of

feudal exploitation and the sufferings of tenants in Kanika and drew sympathy from the general public for the Kanika tenants. Mc Pherson, the Home Member of the Bihar and Orissa Government got the poem translated into English for knowing its content.[33]

In August 1922, Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Mahapatra, the Bhadrak M. L. C. raised the Kanika issue in Bihar and Orissa Ligislative Council. On 25 August Mahapatra moved a resolution in the Legislative Council, demanding the appointment of a committee with non-official majority for inquiry into Kanika troubles[34] Mc Pherson, the Home Member stoutly opposed the resolution on the ground that the Kanika agitation was politically motivated, as there was no genuine agrarian grievance. He held that the enhancement of rent on land was legally valid according to section 30 of the Orissa Tenancy Act, and that the revised average rent in Kanika was much below the general average rent in the Moghulbandi of Orissa As regards the forest cess he cited the court's verdict given in favour of the Raja in 1912. He commended the Raja of Kanika in the following words:

> Many members of this Council are, I think, personally acquainted with the Raja. as he has taken a considerable part in the public life of the province. He received a careful education to prepare him for the responsibilities of his position, and I think he is generally acknowledged to have discharged those with credit. He is not an absentee landlord, he spends the greater portion of his time on his estate; he has the reputation of being liberal-minded and he displays great generosity not only towards his tenantry but also towards the general public of Orissa. I need only refer to his benefactions on behalf of higher education in Orissa. His relations with his people have been of the happiest kind until these recent events occurred, for he has always been most helpful to them. when they have been afflicted with the (calamity of flood to which the estate is from its position 'peculiarly liable'.[35]

Mc Pherson attributed three factors to the Kanika tenants' agitation - propaganda by the Congress Non-cooperators who felt provoked by the courageous and strong condemnation of the . Non-cooperation movement by the Raja of Kanika, the *Meli* .(the tendency to combine against the Zamindar) habit of *Mustagir* families and the long-standing quarrel between the Raja of Kanika and his brother, the Raja of Aul (who had become a convenient rallying centre for the agitators).[36] Mahapatra's resolution, demanding inquiry into Kanika affairs was also opposed by such members of the Legislative Council as Rebati Kanta Ghosh, Charuchandra Raychaudhury, Biswanath Kar, Maulavi Shaikh Abdul Majid, and Pitabas Pattanayak. Rebati Kanta Ghosh held that there was no real grievance behind the agitation and attributed the agitation to "regular and systematic activities of Non-cooperators at Kanika" and "false hopes", "held out to ignorant people regarding non-payment of Raja's dues". Ghosh said. "The whole trouble was brought about by the influence of the Non-cooperation movement. Gradually people grew more and more defiant and prevented the Raja's employees from doing their duties. The creed of Non-cooperation was lost and the so-called non-violent non-cooperation was converted by the ignorant masses to violent non-cooperation. Fish was forcibly caught from the Raja's tank, mangoes and other fruits were plucked, timbers were cut and removed from reserved forests and jungles were destroyed by fire",[37] Charuchandra Ray choudhury made appreciative remarks about the Rajs's sympathy for his tenants and his help to them during the floods of 1913 and 1920. He said:

> "The Raja was managing his estate peacefully as the popular leader not only of his tenantry but as one of the leading men of Orissa. But by a strange irony of fate a sudden and wonderful transformation was seen in the people-all gratitude, love, honour, and obedience and respect for law and order were fast disappearing from amongst the tenantry. The question now comes, what is the cause of this sudden transformation, has it any agrarian discontent in it or is it the direct outcome of the

> mischievous activities of the class of agitators whose sole intention has always been to benefit from any change in the present condition? Sir I submit that it is the inevitable consequence of the hot air blown on villages in Kanika by perambulating agitators, in whom an undigested education has produced a repulsive form of verbal diarrhoea. Unfortunately for the Raja, Kanika was selected as their place of action. Kanika was always uppermost in their minds as they found it congenial to their purpose. Kanika was marked out for their activities as it was one of the biggest and most important estates in Orissa. They have always tried to bring chaos in places where law and order prevails for their sinister motives. As they found no support or sympathy from the Raja they worked with vengeance"[38].

Biswanath Kar referred to two strikes in the Raj Kanika High School and the statement of Madhusudan Pattanayak, the Non-cooperator from Tigiria in the court that "he was mainly responsible for the state of affairs in Kanika." Kar said, "There is no denying the fact that the Non-cooperators had a free hand in the Kanika Raj and preached their doctrines there to their hearts' content. They spread discontent among the ignorant and easily excitable masses and incited them against all authcrity. We all know the tactics of average Non-cooperators-they catch the unsophisticated minds of thoughtless people by creating false hopes in them". Kar described the Kanika tenants as "notorious for *Meli* or combination", the Kanika estate as "one of the best managed estates of Orissa", and its Raja as "one of the most considerate of the landlords".[39] Maulavi Shaikh Abdul Majid pointed out that judicial findings revealed that Kanika disturbances were due to the Non-cooperation movement. He held that the people "were not only defiant towards the Raj employees but also towards the Government and their officials". Majid opposed the idea of inquiry, as it would simply raise people's feelings and excite them again.[40] Pitabas Pattanayak said that the enhancement of rent was not the real reason for the disturbance as

the people had already been paying the enhanced rent since last six years and that subsequent suspension of payment of rent was the outcome of the impact of all-India movement.[41] Mahapatra's resolution, demanding inquiry was lost without a division. But the Government conceded the major agrarian demand of the tenants, i.e., a settlement by Government in supersession of the Raja's private settlement. The Home Member Me Pherson announced in the floor of the Legislative Council. "Kanika is included in the survey and settlement programme of the Orissa Settlement. The Balasore area will come under the operation in less than two years' time, and the Cuttack operation probably one year later. A new record of rights will then be prepared and the accuracy and legality of the estate records will be fully tested. "[42] This announcement was a recognition of the agrarian grievance behind the tenants' agitation. During the settlement operation the basic agrarian causes of conflict between the Raja of Kanika and his tenants came to light. The tenants claimed the right to pay fixed rents on the ground that Kanika was a permanently settled zamindari estate and that the Raja himself was paying a fixed *Jamma* to the Government. The Raja did not recognize this claim of royats and wanted to raise the rent as desired by him on the ground that rents had been revised in the past as a result of "four successive settlements", "made under the direct supervision of Government"[43]. The royats claimed the right to transfer occupancy holidings, but the Raja would not allow any occupancy holidings to be transferred without his consent[44]. "Since tenancy is the creation of the landlord, and a tenant always derives his right from the landlord", held the Raja, "no rights in deprivation of his ownership can be reserved or created by any body other than himself"[45]. Thought in principle Government officials agreed with the royats' claim for fixed rent, they actually tried to strike a compromise between the Raja and royats on the fixation of rent. In 1928 the

Government rejected the Raja's petition to extend certificate procedure to his estate in Balasore district.[46] Subsequently when the High Court acquitted Chakradhar Behera and other tenant leaders, who had been arrested under section 107 it held that the Kanika agitation was only a tenants' agitation, having no taint of treason.[47]. It would be however correct to say that the Kanika tenants' agitation derived inspiration from the Non-cooperation movement, and that it was also a part of the Non-cooperation movement because of the Kanika Raja's loyalistic attitude as well as opposition to the Non-cooperation movement, the involvement of provincial Congress leaders and organization of Congress movment in Kanika.

The peasants' disturbance mostly took place in Chhamuka, the Cuttack portion of Kanika. Panchmuka, the Balasore portion mostly remained quiet because of an amicable understanding between Hudson, the Irish Superintendent of Police in Balasore and H. K. Mahtab, the Balasore Congress leader, both of whom wanted to expose the repressive policy of Raja while keeping the people restrained[48]. In Panchmuka the sufferings of the tenants were considerably minimized as a result of the vigilant agitation under the leadership of Chakradhar Behera. But in Chhamuka the sufferings of tenants continued almost unabeted after 1922. *Dukhini Kanika* continued to stir the people's minds. In 1924, in the first session of the Orissa Provincial Conference, Banchhanidhi Mohanty, the nationalist poet sang a self-composed song on the sufferings of Kanika tenants, which moved the audience to tears. In 1932 *Dukhini Kanika* was published for the second time. So far as Rajendra Narayan Bhanjadeo, the Raja of Kanika was concerned, he became

more determined than before to fight the Congress whose moral support had been the main cause of the tenants' agitation of 1921-22. In 1924 he formed a Zamindars' party to fight the Congress. "This fight ended in the defeat of the Kanika party in the elections of 1937"[49]

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VI

FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN JAGATSINGHPUR DISTRICT (1920-1938)

Freedom movement in Jagatsinghpur district which was earlier a sub-division of the undivided Cuttack district is significant for three reasons. First, in the initial phase of the Gandhian movement the Alaka Ashram of Jagatsinghpur played an important role in the implementation of the Gandhian constructive programme and induction of quite a number of people into the freedom movement. Secondly, the Salt *satyagraha* of Kujang occupies an important place in the overall scenario of Salt *satyagraha* in Orissa. Thirdly, after the withdrawal of Salt *satyagraha*, when there was peasant movement on all India basis, at Jagatsinghpur, Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Devi played an active role in organizing the peasant movement.

On the eve of Mahatma Gandhi's emergence as the leader of Congress and launching of the Non-cooperation movement there was no Congress organization in Orissa. At that time, the public activities of the Oriya intelligentsia were confined to the Utkal Union Conference and Madhusudan Das, the father figure of this body was the unchallenged leader of Orissa. But because of the influence of the outside events, such as anti-Rowlatt bill agitation and Punjab and Khilafat wrongs two schools of nationalist thought emerged in Orissa, which wanted to join the national mainstream instead of remaining confined within the groove of Utkal Union Conference. One school of nationalist thought emerged at Sakhigopal under the leadership of Pandit Gopabandhu Das, the founder of Satyabadi School. The Satyabadi School and its teachers and workers

"created a new consciousness and set a new ideal in Orissa."[1] Another school of nationalist thought was a young readers' club cum library started at Cuttack in 1919. It was called Bharati Mandir (Temple of Goddess of Learning); it had been started by Gopabandhu Chaudhury (a young deputy magistrate), Bhagirathi Mahapatra (a young lawyer) and some college students like Nabakrushna Chaudhury (Gopabandhu's younger brother) and Nityananda Kanungo. The members of this institution felt inspired by nationalist ideas. Harekrushna Mahtab who was a student of the Ravenshaw College at the beginning of Non-cooperation movement and associated with Bharati Madir makes the following remark about the impact of this institution: "In 1921, in Orissa, the Bharati Mandir acted as a powerful medium of the electric current that originated from Sabarmati and spread all over India"[2]

National School and Alaka Ashram

The establishment of national school and Alaka Ashram at Jagatsinghpur was the extension of nationalist activity by the Chaudhury brothers – Gopabandhu and Nabakrushna from Cuttack town to Jagatsinghpur which was at that time basically rural and somewhat inaccessible. It was 28 miles away from Cuttack. There was no regular plying of bus between Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur in 1920's. The only regular conveyance between Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur was puller boat in Machhagan Canal. Gokulananda Chaudhury, the father of the Chaudhury brothers was a Zamindar of Jagatsinghpur, practising law at Cuttack. He was an associate of Madhusudan Das in Utkal Union Conference from 1903 to 1908. He was also the Vice-Chairman of Cuttack district board from 1908 to 1915. An M.A. from Calcutta University, Gopabandhu Chaudhury had joined as a deputy magistrate at Cuttack in 1917. In January or February 1921 he resigned from his job to join the Gandhian

nationalist movement. His younger brother Nabakrushna who was a student of the Ravenshaw College at the launch of Non-cooperation movement discontinued his studies in 1921 to join the movement. At that time, when educated youths where seeking Government jobs in towns, the Chaudhury brothers set an example of social service and sacrifice by taking up social work in Jagatsinghpur, away from Cuttack.

National school was started at Jagatsinghpur on 8 May 1921[3]. The Alka Ashram of Jagatsinghpur was started on the day of the worship of Goddess of Learning in 1924[4]. Gopabandhu Das came to inaugurate it. The Ashram was established within a mango grove, provided by Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the first Secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee, who happened to be the son of the prominent local Zamindar Durga Charan Mahapatra of the village Chatra. The Ashram was situated between the Machhagan canal and the Alaka river, and was named after the river. This river was a distributary of the Kathjudi. In past it was navigable. Jagatsinghpur was inhabited by many weavers whose handloom cloths were imported by the East Indian Company's merchants in the seventeenth century. Because of the deposition of silt the river became narrow and shallow. On the bank of the river, a little away from Jagatsinghpur, there was a place called *Firingikuda* where the remnants of the Company's business centre had been seen by people. The national school and Alaka Ashram functioned in straw-thatched houses, having walls made of clay and bamboos. There were three types of inmates staying in Alaka Ashram – students, teachers and Congressman (workers and leaders). Gopabandhu Chaudhury was the main organizer and manager of the Alaka Ashram. There were quite a number of people in the Ashram who became actively involved in the nationalist movement and public life, such as Pandit

Pranakrushna Padhiary (who had resigned from the Head Mastership of the local Government teacher training school), Gokulananda Mahanty and Nabakrushna Chaudhury (who had discontinued their studies in the Ravenshaw College to join the nationalist movement), Nilamani Pradhan, Udaynath Sarangi, Bishwanath Parida, Babaji Ramdas, Bishwanath Nanda, Ramakrushna Nanda and Gunanidhi Mohanty. Ramdas Babaji who was born in U.P. and a Sanyasi from very childhood and had learnt Sanskrit in Athgarh and Pranakrushna Padhiary (a lin and thin person of small stature, with few hairs on head, outspoken and always chewing betel) were very actively working to raise subscriptions for the Alaka Ashram. From 1928 Gopabandhu Chaudhury started staying in Alaka Ashram with his family (wife Ramadevi, son Manmohan and daughter Annapurna). By 1930 some Congressmen were staying in the Alaka Ashram with their wives, such as Bishwanath Hota and his wife Prafulla (from Balasore), Satyabadi Nanda and his wife Laxmi (from Puri), Antaryami Panda and his wife Shova (from Ganjam), Lalbihari and his wife Gunamanjari (from Puri)[5].

To start with, Alaka Ashram followed three lines of activities – promotion of national education, promotion of *khadar* and rendering social service to the people in surrounding villages specially at the time of outbreak of cholera and malaria. So far as national education is concerned, teaching was imparted up to High School standard with special emphasis on spinning, weaving and agriculture. In the national school, initially there were 120 students and fifteen teachers[6]. The national school was bringing out a monthly manuscript journal, titled *Alaka.*

For promotion of *khadar* there were 40 spinning wheels and 10 handlooms in Alaka Ashram. Workers were coming from

different parts of Orissa and Singhbhum to learn spinning and weaving.[7]

The involvement of Congressmen in council and district board elections gave a blow to the constructive work at Alaka Ashram. In 1924 Gopabandhu Chaudhury was elected as the Chairman of Cuttack district board. Now he had to do two works simultaneously – the management of district board and Alaka Ashram. Under these circumstances the national school became a greater victim than the *khadar* programme. As Ramadevi writes, "National schools were being run at Sakhigopal and Jagatsinghpur. But the teachers were not interested in teaching. The initial zeal and seriousness became lax because of inclination towards electoral politics"[8]. At the beginning of 1923 there were fifty students in national school.[9] According to the report in *Utkal Dipika*, dated 29 March 1924 it had twenty five students and 7/8 teachers. By 7 February 1925, as reported in *Utkal Dipika* the decline of the national school was mainly due to want of financial support.[10] The national school appears to have languished up to 1929. According to the official report, dated 1 July 1929 in Cuttack district there was one national school having three pupils and by 1 April 1930 there was no national school in Cuttack district.[11]

While Alaka Ashram was functioning at Jagatsinghpur under the supervision of Gopabandhu Chaudhury, in the village named Anakhia, which was five miles away from Alaka Ashram Nabakrushna Chaudhury established an agricultural farm in his paternal land. In 1925-26 the younger Chaudhury had spent some months in poet R.N. Tagore's Shantiniketan, and listened to lectures on rural economics from a Bengali economist Dr. Taraknath Das, While receiving orientation in rural economics at Shantiniketan, Nabakrushna fell in love with an an alumna of Shantiniketan, named

Malati Sen, a Bengali Vaidya girl whom he married after some time. On return from Shantiniketan Nabakrushna started agricultural farming at Anakhia, and did some social work in the surrounding locality; he taught illiterate youngmen of the villages at night. After his marriage in 1927 Nabakrushna and Malatidevi stayed in the farm house at Anakhia and continued their work together. It is said that Nabakrushna maintained his contact with the farm at Anakhia till 1936.

On 26 January 1930 when Complete Independence Day was celebrated all over India, in Alaka Ashram, in the presence of policemen, sub-divisional magistrate and some inmates of the Ashram Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the founder of the Ashram hoisted the Congress flag.[12] Inspired by the activities of Alaka Ashram people from Jagatsinghpur later on took part in the forthcoming Salt *satyagraha*. The decision to launch Salt *satyagraha* in Kujang was taken by Ramadevi in the Alaka Ashram in the summer of 1930 in the presence of Narayan Birabara Samanta, the Gandhian Congressman from Kujang. About this decision Samanta has given the following account in his memoirs: "In the historic Alaka Ashram, deeply shadowed by the mango trees, at noon, it was decided that on the next Akshay Trutiya day under the leadership of a woman leader the Salt *satyagraha* of Cuttack district would be launched at Kujang. To make necessary preparation for this purpose Ramadevi left from Cuttack on that day and I rushed to Kujang."[13]

On 8 May 1930 Narayan Birabara Samanta who had earlier resigned from the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council announced at Cuttack that he would start *satyagraha* at Kujang. He was immediately arrested after this announcement but was set free after some time.[14] Kujang was a Zamindary of the Maharaja of Burdwan.[15] There was opposition to Salt Satyagraha being launched

there not only from the British authorities but also from the Zamindary officials. Nevertheless Samanta, Ramadevi, Malati Chaudhury and Dr. Brajanath Mishra mobilized the people for manufacturing contraband salt. On 17 May a meeting was held on the Kathjudi river bed to give send-off to the first batch of *satyagrahis* before they proceeded towards Kujang. In the meeting Malatidevi felicitated the *satyagrahis* with flowers and sandal paste and speeches were delivered by Bira Kishore Das (of Balikuda) and two persons from Shrijang village.[16] By the end of May, not less than four batches of *satyagrahis* violated salt law at Kujang[17]. As a result of the persuasion of Ramadevi and Malati Chaudhury many villagers came forward to help the *satyagrahis* by supplying food and water. The villagers also joined the *satyagrahis* from Cuttack in organizing *satyagraha*. The Kujang *satyagraha* continued in spite of harassment and repression by the police. By the first week of June 1930 fifty six *satyagrahis* were manufacturing salt in three places of Kujang. On 6 June Bhababati Pata Mahadei, the Rani of Kujang violated salt law at Kaliapat with 500 *satyagrahis*. The participation of the Rani in the salt campaign roused great enthusiasm among the villagers, particularly the village women, belonging to fisherman's caste. The women came out of the houses with baskets to collect salt earth along with the Rani. On 7 June the Rani violated salt law with more than 3000 men and women.[18] The salt manufacturer was carried on in eight centres of the Cuttack district – Garh-Kujang, Chatua, Kaliapat, Paradip, Ersama, Kankardia, Dardia and Ratua.[19]

Rai Bahadur Madhab Chandra Mishra, the sub-divisional magistrate of Cuttack suppressed the Kujang *satyagraha* ruthlessly with the help of policemen and the officials of the Burdwan Zamindar. Mishra shabbily treated the *satyagrahis* by uttering abusive language and breaking the earthen pots, used for boiling brine, cooking rice

and storing drinking water. The drinking water which the *satyagrahis* were bringing from a place, one and half miles away from the venue of salt *satyagraha* was being thrown away by the police.[20]

There were certain elements educated as well as uneducated who were opposed to the Civil Disobedience Movement and Salt *satyagraha*. Dewan Bahadur Shrikrushna Mahapatra, a Superintendent of Police who belonged to the family of the staunch Congressman Bhagirathi Mahapatra was a staunch opponent of the C.D. movement. He along with eleven others received a *sanad* from the Commissioner of Orissa division on 2 March 1931 for cooperating with the Government during the C.D. movement.[21] On 30 July 1930 a meeting was held in the Balikuda Dak Bunglow under the chairmanship of the Zamindar Laxmidhar Das. In this meeting Rajkishore Kanungo, the head master of the local M.E. School and Ramachandra Ghose, the school sub-inspector explained to an audience of 800 people the state of lawlessness and evil results arising out of the violation of laws and picketting. This meeting was attended by the S.D.O. Madhab Chandra Mishra, local Zamindars, Government officials, teachers of primary and middle English Schools and union presidents.[22]

During the second phase of the Civil Disobedience movement which began after Mahatma Gandhi's return from the Round Table Conference the Government decided to seize the Alaka Ashram. On 14 February 1932 the Alaka Ashram and the *Khadar* store in its premises were searched by the police. By an order of the Governor in Council, Government of Bihar and Orissa, dated 17 March 1932 the Ashram was taken possession of by an officer, authorized by the district magistrate of Cuttack and its articles (books and various other items) a long schedule of which is to be found in official record were ordered to be forfeited to His Majesty

and destroyed. As officially recorded the Ashram premises had 267 mango, 22 jack fruit and five coconut trees.[23] On 18 June 1932 the Balikuda Ashram which had been established by Gopabandhu Chaudhury was declared unlawful.[24]

The Alaka Ashram could not be revived in post-C.D. movement period. In 1934 Gopabandhu Chaudhury chose Bari in Jajpur sub-division as the place for constructive work. Today one cannot trace the place where the Alaka Ashram had been built up; it has been divided among the members of the Mahapatra family. But the role of Alaka Ashram in the Gandhian nationalist movement of Orissa cannot be forgotten. Quite a number of men as well as women belonging to Cuttack as well as other districts of Orissa, such as Puri and Balasore were inducted into the nationalist movement through Alaka Ashram. Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Ramadevi, Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Devi had their early experience in nationalist activities at Jagatsinghpur. In coastal Orissa there were two important centres of nationalist movement in the initial phase – Sakhigopal and Alaka Ashram. Though both the schools were following the Gandhian line, yet there was some rivalry between the two schools as was seen in the choice of venue for the AICC session proposed to be held in 1932.

In the post – C.D. movement period Nabakrushna became a member of the executive of the All India Congress Socialist Party; he organized the Orissa branch of the Congress Socialist Party; he organized peasant movement in the coastal districts of Orissa – Cuttack, Puri and Balasore in general and Jagatsinghpur in particular. In August 1935 the all Orissa Kisan Sangha was organized with Harekrushna Mahatab as President and Malati Devi and Surendra Nath Dwivedi as Joint Secretaries. In 1934-35, prompted by Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Harekrushna Biswal, the Congressman

from Balikuda organized a peasant agitation against the illegal collection by the Zamindar of Harishpur (belonging to Laha family)[25]. With Jawaharlal Nehru as the President of Indian National Congress for 1936 the Congress party adopted the programme of peasants' organization and rural reconstruction. Kisan Sabhas were formed in various parts of Orissa. In Cuttack district five Kisan Sabhas were formed – 4 in Jagatsinghpur thana and 1 in Gobindapur thana. In a meeting of the Kisan Sabha held at Bagalpur (near Anakhia) on 19 March 1936 under the presidentship of H.K. Mahtab, resolutions were passed, urging the peasants to stop payment of *salami* to the Zamindars on the occasion of marriage and other festivals and form Kisan Sabhas and the Government to reduce water cess by 50%, appoint a committee to fix land rents, reduce interest charged on loans by cooperative society, establish agricultural marketing organization and debt reconciliation banks to save the peasants from indebtedness. In 1936, in Kujang estate Narayan Birabara Samanta organized an association, called the 29 Mauza Sabha to raise a common fund to facilitate the payment of rent and payment of loans to money lenders and sale of paddy on cooperative basis.[26]

In order to get the peasants' support and cooperation in the election to the provincial legislature which was to be held in early 1937 the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee took up the cause of peasants in its election campaign which began in right earnest from September 1936. The UPCC at its meeting held on 11-12 October accepted in toto the draft manifesto submitted by the provincial Kisan Sangha and resolved that it should form part of the general manifesto. The draft manifesto included demands for reduction in land tax, total exemption of small cultivators from land tax, cancellation of arrears of rent, and tax on agricultural incomes. Along with the preparation for the forthcoming elections the Congressmen took up

the organization of peasants. In a number of peasant meeting held in different parts of the province during the first half of November 1936 the peasants, were exhorted to further their cause by joining the Congress and casting their votes in favour of the Congress candidates. The peasants also evinced keen interest in the work of Congress for the removal of their grievances.

Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Orissa in November 1936 not only helped the Congress in electioneering but also encouraged the peasant and socialist movement. He addressed meetings in Jagatsinghpur, Biridi, Kendrapara, Chandol, Bahugram, Salepur, Cuttack, Puri and Berhampur. Nehru appealed to the peasants to vote for the Congress in election, because it was going to achieve *Swaraj* and end all kinds of exploitation and poverty of the masses. He urged them to form Kisan Sabhas and fight against the Government as well as the Zamindars.

In 1937 elections in some places there were contests between the Congress and the Zamindars or their candidates. In Tirtol – Ersama constituency there was a contest between Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Chintamani Acharya (a lawyer by profession, and a loyalist by conviction who was strongly backed by the manager of the Kujang Zamindary, Rai Bahadur Rajendra Kumar Sen and his sub-ordinates). On behalf of Chaudhury electioneering was being managed by Narayan Birabar Samanta. Chaudhury won the election.

In 1936-37 Jagatsinghpur area became politically active because of holding of meetings for mobilization of peasants, enrolment of Congressmen and electioneering. The peasant movement gave rise to conflicts between the Zamindars and peasants and ideological rift within the Congress Party between the leftists and rightists. To curb the peasant movement in Kujang the authorities

instituted criminal proceedings against some peasant leaders and a Zamindar filed a defamation case against the Socialist mouthpiece *Krushak*.[27] Some Zamindars and money lenders of Tirtol, Salepur and Jagatsinghpur complained of acts of oppression being committed by the local socialists in the peasant meetings addressed by N.K. Chaudhury and Malati Devi in Anantapur and Padmapokhari in January 1938.[28]

Within the Congress Party while the leftists like Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Malati Devi and Pranakrushna Padhiary wanted to develop the peasant movement as a separate force along socialist line and work for radical reforms like abolition of Zamindary, the right wing Congressmen like Nilakantha Das and Harekrushna Mahtab raised objections to separate organization of the peasants. On 30 April 1937 the Cuttack district peasants conference was held at Anakhia, Gobindapur P.S. under the presidency of Malati Chaudhury. She urged that Utkal Krushak Sangha must always remain a separate body and should on no account be subordinate to Congress which had in its fold many Zamindars and capitalists whose interests were totally different from those of peasants. She criticized Nilakantha Das who, when presiding over the peasants' conference at Puri said that the Kisan Sangha should be amalgamated with Congress. She said that if at any time a revolutionary change was to be introduced in India, the initiative must come from the peasants with hungry stomachs.[29] But the UPCC which was headed by Harekrushna Mahtab resolved in its meeting at Banpur against the separate existence of the Krushaka Sangha.[30] In a meeting, held at Patsundarpur, Gobindapur P.S. on 18 November 1937 under the chairmanship of Pranakrushna Padhiary a resolution was passed for abolition of Zamindary and mutation fees.[31] On the other hand, in a meeting held at Pachhikote hat on 16 April 1938 (which was

organized by Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Devi) H.K. Mahtab asked the peasants not to combine against the Zamindars, make compromise with the latter and include them in the Kisan Sangha.[32] The elder Chaudhury brother also supported the stand taken by Mahtab. While raising subscriptions for the Gandhi Seba Sangha meeting, which was to be held at Delang in March 1938, in Tirtol, Saleput and Jagatsinghpur Gopabandhu Chaudhury and Acharya Harihar Das advised the people to pay legal dues to Zamindars and money lenders and not to promote class hatred.[33]

Notes and references

1. Harekrushna Mahtab, *Dashavarshara Odisha* (Oriya) Cuttack, 1977, p.13
2. *Ibid*, p. 17
3. Gopinath Mahanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha* (Oriya) Cuttack, 1985, p. 57
4. *Ibid*, p. 58
5. Ramadevi Chaudhury, *Jivana Pathe* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1984, p. 87
6. *Ibid,* p. 51
7. Mahanty, *Op. cit.*, p. 61
8. Chaudhury, *Op. cit.*, p. 64
9. *Utkal Dipika*, 7 February 1925
10. *Ibid*
11. Confidential file, Accession no.276 Orissa State Archives (hereafter OSA)

12. Mahanty, *Op. cit.*, p. 101

13. Narayan Birabara Samanta, *Jivana Smruti* (Oriya) (Edited by Bani Samanta), Cuttack, N.D., p. 81

14. *Utkal Dipika*, 24 May 1930

15. Till 1874 Kujang was a Zamindary of the local Shandha royal family. Under sun set law, because of the failure to pay revenue in time, Kujang passed into the hands of the Maharaja of Burdwan in 1874. Thereafter the Shandha family had to live in poverty, though still enjoying the respect of the people in Kujang. The family maintained itself by some income from temple endowments and a monthly allowance of Rs.60/- (Rupees Sixty only) given by the Maharaja of Burdwan. This allowance was stopped when Narayan Birabara Samanta, the son-in-law of the widowed Rani of Kujang Bhababati Pata Mahadei protested against the oppressive activities of the officials of the Maharaja of Burdwan. The Rani also supported the pro-people activities of Samanta, his son-in-law.

16. *Utkal Dipika*, 31 May 1930

17. *Ibid*

18. Nilamani Pradhan's Report, AICC file (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library)

19. Ibid

20. Pranakrushna Padhiary's Report AICC file (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library)

21. *Satya Samachar*, 7 March 1931

22. *Satya Samachar*, 6 August 1930

23. Confidential file (Accession No.339) OSA, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Political Department, Special Section, Patna, order, dated 17 March 1932.
24. Ibid
25. Padma Charan Nayak ,*Anirvan* (Oriya), Bhubaneswar 1996, p. 85
26. Confidential file (Accession No.1058) letter from Collector of Cuttack to E R Wood, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 26 March 1938
27. Ibid, letter from Collector of Cuttack to E R Wood, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 26 April, 1938
28. Ibid
29. Confidential file (Accession No.625, OSA) fortnightly political report from Collector of Cuttack to P T Mansfield, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 10 May, 1937
30. *New Orissa*, 19 June, 1937
31. Confidential file (Accession No.625, OSA) letter from Collector of Cuttack to P T Mansfield, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 24 November, 1937.
32. Confidential file (Accession No.1058, OSA), letter from Collector of Cuttack to E R Wood, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 26 April 1938
33. Ibid, letter from Collector of Cuttack to E R Wood, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 11 February 1938

VII

NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN BHADRAK DISTRICT (1914-1939)

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the nationalist movement in Bhadrak district from 1914 to 1939 with special emphasis on Bhadrak town which was earlier the headquarters of the Bhadrak subdivision of the Balasore district and has now become the head-quarters of the newly created district of Bhadrak.

Centrally located on the Grand Trunk Road and South-Eastern Railways between Calcutta and Puri, and not far from Balasore and Cuttack, Bhadrak has been a place of considerable importance since the later part of the nineteenth century. Bhadrak has one of the oldest high schools of Orissa, founded in the later part of the nineteenth century. As early as 1874 there was a public association in Bhadrak, called Bhadrak Desha Hitaishini Sabha. With the growth of political consciousness and nationalist movement in modem Orissa Bhadrak became a seat of political activities and provided such able and eminent public figures of Orissa as Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra, Harekrushna Mahtab, Banchhanidhi Mohanty, Chakradhar Behera, Maulavi Muhammad Hanif, Laxmikanta Mahapatra, Bhagabat Sahu, Nityananda Mahapatra and Nilamani Routroy.'

The Bhadrak High School was the breeding ground of anti-British and nationalist feelings during the First World War. The nationalist proclivities of the students of this school during the war were encouraged by the Headmaster, Hemendra Nath Ghosal. On some occasions the students used to clash with the police. During the First World War the encounter of Bagha Jatin, the terrorist

leader with the police at Balasore stirred the students of Bhadrak High school. Consequently C.I.D. _Policemen used to suspect some students of anti-government activities.[1] In May 1915 Bhadrak was visited by Ananta Mishra. the emissary of Utkal Union Conference. On 15 May he addressed a meeting at Dhamnagar. This meeting which was presided over by Maulana Abdul Muhammad stressed Hindu-Muslim unity. Ananta Mishra also addressed students of Bhadrak High school and at the request of Harekrushna Mahtab. the minor Zamindar of Agarpada. who was then a student of this school he went to Agarpada where he addressed a meeting on 17 May.[2]

In September 1920. Harekrushna Mahtab. then a student of the Ravenshaw College attended the special session of Indian National Congress, held in Calcutta. In December 1920 Mahtab .attended the Nagpur session of the Congress. Thereafter he discontinued his study in the Ravenshaw College and plunged into the nationalist movement. Banchhanidhi Mohanty . who was reading Law discontinued his study and joined the movement. Maulavi Muhammad Hanif resigned from the post of excise sub-Inspector in 1921 and started mobilising the Muslims of Bhadrak in the nationalist movement. Early in 1921 the executive of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee was organised. Harekrushna Mahtab was entrusted with the responsibility of organizing the Congress Party in Balasore District. He became the secretary of the Balasore District Congress Committee, while Bipin Bihari Das was its President. At this stage Banchhanidhi Mohanty was given the charge of organizing Congress Party in Bhadrak subdivision [3].

In March 1921 Mahatma Gandhi came to Orissa. He addressed public meetings in four places - Cuttack. Puri. Bhadrak and Berhampur.--On his way to Cuttack by train Gandhi was very pleased to see enthusiastic crowds at Bhadrak railway station and

went back from Cuttack to Bhadrak on 25 March to fulfil his promise to meet them again. At Bhadrak. on this occasion, Gandhi addressed three meetings.

At the beginning of Non-cooperation Movement a Congress Ashram and a National School were opened in Bhadrak. Subsequently Ashrams were opened in other places of Bhadrak subdivision like Bhandaripokhari and Chandbali. In Bhadrak town the boycott of courts and picketting of liquor shops were vigorously carried on. For one year no zamindar of Bhadrak dared to file any rent-suit against the defaulting- tenants.[4] Success of the Non-eooperation movement in Bhadrak was mainly due to the organising ability of Banchhanidhi Mohanty. He was a good organiser, a composer of nationlist songs and a powerful singer. His poems, sung by himself and others in public meetings stirred the people's minds and electrified the whole atmosphere. In a meeting, held in Iram, his native village in April 1921 he sang the following song;

A new era has ushered in,

A new era has ushered in India,

A crore of heroes have united

Hordes after hordes they are entering prison houses

Hordes after hordes, they are welcoming death,

They would die but kill none

Their strategy has struck terror in enemies.[5]

Banchhanidhi Mohanty was ably assisted by others such as Ghanashyam Sahu, Upendra Nath Panda and Maulavi Muhammad Hanif.

As Bhadrak town had a large Muslim population, the Khilafat

movement which was being carried on side by side with the Non-cooperation movement gained momentum among the Muslims of the town. During the Non-cooperation movement Majharul Huq, the Muslim leader of Bihar came to Bhadrak.[6] In the initial phase of Gandhian era Maulavi Muhammad Hanif, the nationalist Muslim (who did not possess any landed property and yet had resigned from government service and was earning his livelihood by repairing cycles and watches) was acknowledged by the Muslims of Bhadrak as their leader. But later on as communalism grew and Muslim League exercised its influence on the Muslims, Hanif lost his influence on Muslims, even though he earned a lot of respect among the Hindus. When Mahatma Gandhi came to Bhadrak during Harijan *Padayatra* (foot march) in June 1934 Hanif was made the chairman of reception committee.[7] During the hey day of communalism an impression was created among the Bhadrak Muslims that if Pakistan was created, Bhadrak would be a part of Pakistan.[8]

During the Non-cooperation movement many meetings were held in Bhadrak and other places of the subdivision. Gopabandhu Das, the President of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee addressed some meetings in Bhadrak, Iram and other places.

The Bhadrak town and subdivision were considerably agitated by the tenants' movement which began in the zamindary estate of Kanika during the Non-cooperation movement, because the Panchmuka portion of the Kanika Zamindary was a part of the Bhadrak subdivision. The rivers Vaitarani and Dhamra constituted the natural dividing lines between the Cuttack and Balasore portions of the Zamindary. There was a strong background of agrarian grievance behind the mobilization of people of Kanika during the Non-cooperation movement. The Kanika tenants' agitation in 1921-22 was caused by the enhancement of land revenue and jungle tax.

through a private settlement, enforced since 1916. But it was strongly backed by the ,Non-cooperators and the agitating tenants felt boosted by the Non-coorperation movement. Towards the end of 1921 a meeting of thousands of tenants from Chhamuka, Panchmuka and Kerada was held at Rajkanika.In that meeting Dinabandhu Khandayatray (the Chhamuka tenant leader) and Biswanath Rout (the Kerada tenant leader) urged the people not to pay rent at the enhanced rate.[9] At that time Chakradhar Behera, the accountant of Raja of Kanika· resigned from his service, protesting against the Raja's anti-tenant policy. Behera, who had passed matriculation from the Bhadrak High school, being placed in the first division soon emerged a leader of the tenants in Panchmuka. On 2 January 1922 Chakradhar Behera organised a meeting of tenants at Megha Nuagan.[10] After the police firing on the peasant mob, which took place on 23 April 1922 at Patrapur and resulted in two casualties, 150 people were arrested and were. made to walk with hand-cuffs from Chhamuka through Panchmuka and Bhadrak to Cuttack for terrorising the people. From Cuttack the -accused persons were brought to Rajkanika for trial.[11]

After the suspension ofNon-cooperation the Congress leaders of Orissa kept aloof from the Kanika movement on the plea that it was a local agrarian movement. But the Government adopted all possible precautionary measures for preventing the involvement of the Orissa Congress leaders in the Kanika issue. In Cuttack and Bhadrak section 144 was clamped to prevent the holding of any meeting on Kanika issue. On 14 May 1922, the meeting ofUtkal Pradesh Congress Conunittee, held at Balasore passed a resolution which was moved by Gopabandhu Das, demanding an impartial inquiry into atrocities in Kanika.On 16 May 1922 Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra (the Secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress

Committee) arrived at Bhadrak to attend the Balasore district conference. As soon as they got down from the train, section 144 was served on them .. Nevertheless, they held a meeting within the compound of a mosque. Gopabandhu delivered a very moving speech in this meeting. This meeting passed a resolution, moved by Harekrushna Mahtab, condemning the Kanika flring. For addressing the meeting at Bhadrak in violation of section 144 Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra were sentenced to imprisonment. Kanika remained in his heart, as Gopabandhu went to jail. In the poem *Bandir Atmakatha*(the Memoir of a prisoner)which Gopabandhu wrote in' Jail, he .very touchingly' referred to Kanika and Bhadrak. About Bhadrak he wrote :

Bhadrak is my most favourite place My work there won me first honour.[12]

In August 1922 Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra, the Bhadrak M.L.C. (Member of Legislative Council) raised the Kanika issue in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council. He moved a resolution, demanding the appointment 'of a committee with non-official majority for inquiry into Kanika troubles. Though this resolution was lost without a division, the Government conceded the major agrarian demand of tenants i.e., a settlement by Government in supersession of the private settlement, made by the Kanika Raja. On behelf of the Government, Mc Pherson announced in the floor of Legislative Council :

> "Kanika is included in the survey and settlement programme of the Orissa settlement. The Balasore area will come under the operation in less than two years' time and the Cuttack operation probably one year later. A new record of rights will then be prepared and the accuracy and legality of the

estate records will be fully tested."[13]

The peasants' disturbance mostly took place in Chhamuka, the Cuttack portion of Kanika Zamindary. Panchmuka, the Bhadrak protion mostly remained quiet because of an amicable understanding between Hudson, the Irish Superintendent of Police at Balasore and H.K.Mahtab, the Congress leader, both of whom wanted to expose the repressive policy of the Raja of Kanika while keeping the people restrained. In Panchmuka the sufferings of tenants were to some extent mitigated as a result of the vigilant agitation under the leadership of Chakradhar Behera. But in Chhamuka the sufferings of tenants continued almost unabated after 1922. In the Orissa Provincial Conference, held in June 1924. Banchhanidhi Mohanty sang the following song, depicting the sufferings of Kanika tenants, which almost moved the audience to tears;

How long will ill-fated Kanika

bear injustice and oppression?

Who will hear her sorrows ?

There is none to utter a word of sympathy

** ** **

Like Ahalya, the beautiful woman

the woman of Kanika has turned into an image of

stone after long sufferings

Is there no hero like Rama in this land of

Bharat to deliver her by the touch of sacred foot[14]

In December 1924, in a meeting held at Bhadrak under the chairmanship of Harekrushna Mahtab under the auspices of Bhadrak

Local Board Gopabandhu Das was honoured and presented a citation. In reply Gopabandhu said -

> "Bhadrak has earlier accorded to me greater honour than what you are giving me today. My first jail sentence was due to the violation of section 144 at Bhadrak.That is a great honour of my life, for which I am indebted and attached to Bhadrak".[15]

In 1924 the Raja of Kanika formed a Zamindars' Party (called Kanika Party) to fight against the Congress. In the Balasore District Board as the chairman, H.K. Mahtab had to face a lot of opposition from the Kanika Party. In the election to Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, held in 1926, in the Bhadrak Constituency Harekrushna Mahtab. a young Congress candidate defeated the old and venerated zamindar, Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantar.ay Mahapatra, who was the candidate of Kanika Party. In the elections of 1937 to the Orissa Legislative Assembly Chakradhar Behera defeated Girish Chandra Roy, a son of Raja of Kanika in the Eastern Bhadrak constituency. With this defeat Kanika Raja's fight against the Congress ended.

In 1926 the Balasore district political conference was held at Bhadradk under the chairmanship of Nanda Kishore Das. This meeting passed a resolution according to which the Congress party of Orissa recognized the Utkal Union Conference as an integral part of the Orissa Political Conference. The resolution was moved by Harekrushna Mahtab and seconded by Lakshmikanta Mahapatra (the nationalist poet, son of Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra).The resolution was supported among others by Gopabandhu Das and Mukunda Prasad Das (the Mukhtiar of Balasore and son-in-law of Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray

Mahapatra), and opposed by a radical group, led by Surendra Nath Das and Banchhanidhi Mohanty.[16]

In 1927 Jivaram Kalyanji Kothari, a Gujarati follower of Mahatma Gandhi and his wife established an Ashram in Bhadrak. Kothari dedicated his life and wealth to the service of Orissa.

During the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930, Iram was the most important centre of salt *satyagraha* in Bhadrak subdivision. Iram *satyagraha* was led by Banchhanidhi Mohanty,· Laxminarayan Padhi , UpendraPrasad Mahapatra and Sudarsan Panda. Hundreds of people manufactured salt with beating of drums and blowing of conch shell in spite of severe police oppressions. An important feature of the salt satyagraha at Iram was participation of a considerable number of women. On 28 May 1930) 500 women took part in the manufacture of contraband salt at Iram.[17] On 8 June) 600 women manufactured salt in the same centre[18] Besides Iram there were other centres of salt *satyagraha* in Bhadrak subdivision, such as Bachhada, Chudamani, Padhuan and Bideipur. Criticising the police atrocities in the Shrijang village during the campaign against Chaukidari tax Banchhanidhi Mohanty composed the following sympathetic lines :

> In this unhappy land of Utkal the fate of Shrijang has caused anguish to every heart. Anybody who thinks about it shudders.[19]

Protesting against police repression during the Civil Disobedience movement Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra resigned from the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council and his entire family became involved in the Civil Disobedience movement. His son Kamala Kanta Mahapatra (who was a B.A.). and daughters - Janhavi Devi (the wife of Mukunda Prasad Das)

and Kokila Devi and grandson Nityananda Mahapatra (the son of Lakshmikanta Mahapatra who discontinued . his study in High School) took active part in the Civil Disobedience movement; they courted arrest and imprisonment. In 1931 Janhavi Devi and Kokila Devi organised a women's conference at Balasore. Bhagabat Sahu, a young graduate of Bhadrak, who hailed from a poor family took active part in the Civil Disobedience movement.

In August 1932 some students of Bhadrak High. School along with Congress workers tried to trespass into the Bhimpur Ashram, already seized by police. Two students· were rusticated from the Bhadrak High School and a third student was heavily fined for taking part in this openition.[20]

After Gandhi's fast of September 1932 anti-untouchability movement started in Bhadrak. When Mahtab came to Bhadrak early in October 1932, the Collector of Balasore wrote to the Commissioner:

"H.K.Mahtab's reported visit to Bhadrak is suspicious as he is hatching some deeper plan to revive Civil Disobedience Movement in Bhadrak. He is coming with the object of uplift of the depressed classes but holding secret discussions".[21]

Soon after Gandhi's fast, at Agarpada, Mahtab's village he took some untouchables inside his family temple and made them touch the idols. As a result his family was boycotted by the orthodox Hindus.[22] Mahtab was soon arrested and jailed. In Bhadrak the anti-untouchability movement was carried on under the leadership of Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra. Banchhanidhi Mohanty composed the following lines on removal of untouchability;

Oh brother, eradicate the grave sin of untouchabity.

> There is no justification for the discrimination of touchable and untouchable anywhere
>
> Whatever religious texts like *Shrutis* and *Puranas* there are, they change according to the needs of place, circumstances and time.[23]

Jivaram Kalyanji Kothari started *Khadi* work among the Harijans with the commencement of anti-untouchability movement. He worked among Harijan lepers and himself contracted leprosy, but even in the grip of the disease he continued his social work among the Harijans.

Gandhi's Harijan *Padayatra* (foot march) which began at Puri on 9 may 1934 ended at Bhadrak on 8 June 1934.During this tour Gandhi stayed at Bhadrak for three days .. He stayed in two places -Jivaram Kalyanji' s Ashram and H.K.Mahatab' s house. Large number of people gathered in Jivaram Kalyanji's Ashram to listen to Gandhi in spite of the discouragement by the officials.[24] At Bhadrak he advised the workers to carry on their anti- untouchability movement in the villages because , "the vast majority of Harijans live there" and "untouchability has its strongest roots there". [25]

From the end of Civil Disobedience movement in 1933 till 1937 Harekrushna Mahtab mostly stayed in his native village - Agarpada and through his Karma Mandir (temple of duty) organisation carried on constructive work. He and his wife Subhadra Devi engaged themselves in such works as promotion of *Khadar*, village sanitation, and removal of untouchability. Some workers, male and female, helped them in these works. During this period Mahtab also became involved in the activities of Congress .Socialist Party. He became the President of All-Orissa Peasant Organization and presided over the peasant meetings. In April 1938, Banchhanidhi

Mohanty, the nationalist poet and principal organizer of Congress movement in Bhadrak died of small-pox.His untimely death which was deeply mourned in Basudevpur was a great loss to the cause of nationalist movement in Bhadrak and Orissa.

To conclude, it may .be appropriate to highlight the main trends and landmarks in the history of nationalist movement in Bhadrak. Before the commencement of Gandhian era anti-British feelings had germinated among the students of Bhadrak High School" Harekrushna Mahtab and other prominent freedom fighters of Bhadrak were the alumni of this school. Banchhanidhi Mohanty served as the teacher of this school for sometime before joining the law classes. Mahtab always kept· ·contact with the students of Bhadrak High School and tried to recruit workers among them. He addressed them on some occasions. He offered prizes to the students showing proficiency in social work and philanthropic activities. Nilamani Routroy, a former Chief Minister of Orissa who was a student of the Bhadrak High School, once got this prize.[26] During the, Gandhian era Mahatma Gandhi thrice (1921,1927 and 1934) visited Bhadrak and addressed public meetings. With the beginning of the Non-cooperation movement, Banchhanidhi Mohanty and Harekrushna Mahtab started the organization of Congress party in Bhadrak. Banchhanidhi Mohanty was the principal organizer of the Congress movement in Bhadrak during the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements. By speeches and writings and by composing and singing patriotic songs he mobilised people. During the Civil Disobedience movement some families of Bhadrak, particularly those of Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantary Mahapatra, Banchhanidhi Mohanty and Harekrushna Mahtab became deeply involved in the nationalist activities. Holding of meetings, singing of patriotic songs, organisation of *Sankirtan* parties

and door to door approaches were the methods by which the people were mobilised for the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements. During salt *satyagraha* at Iram the spirit of the people was roused and kept up by beating of drums and blowing of conch shells. Though the movement was non-violent. yet its spirit was militant. This is borne out by the popularity of two militant songs of Bir Kishore Das (*Asare aji asa, aji asa daria'dakhal karijiba kie asa*; come, come, let us conquer the sea today) and Banchhanidhi Mohanty (*Kaha Kaha keun jati paichhi mukati kari hari guhari*: Tell me which nation has got freedom by begging) respectively.

Notes and References

1. Harekrushna Mahtab, *Sadhanar Pathe* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1972,pp.8-1O.
2. (i) Mahtab, *op cit.*, p.9.

   (ii) Nivedita Mohanty, *Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa*, New Delhi, 1982, P.59.
3. Mahtab, *op.cit.* p.44.
4. Harekrushna Mahtab, *Dasha Varshara Odisa*, Cuttack, 1977, p.31
5. Sudhakar Dash, *Swadhinata Sangramar Bhumi Iram* (Oriya), Cuttaek, 1976,p.4.
6. Mahtab, *Sadhanar Pathe*. pp.47-48.
7. Nilamani Routroy, *Smruti 0 Anubhuti*, Cuttack, 1986,p.24.
8. *Ibid.* p.26.
9. Prafulla Das, *Kanika Praja Andolanara Itihas* (Oriya), Rajkanika, 1987, p.152.
10. *Ibid.* p.173.

11. *Ibid.*, p.268.
12. Muralidhar Mallik, *Biplabi Chakradhar* (Oriya), Haladia, 1973, p.38
13. *Proceedings of Legislative Council of Bihar and Orissa,* Vol. V, 1922, p. 1027.
14. Mallik, *op.cit*, pp.36-37.
15. *Ibid.*, p.38.
16. Nanda Kishore Das, *Mo jiban O Janjala Kahani* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1981, pp.59-60.
17. *Utkal Dipika*, 7 June 1930.
18. *Utkal Dipika*, 21 June 1930.
19. Sudhakar Dash, *op.cit.*, p.8.
20. WWCC file 56 (Orissa State Archives), letter from the Collector of Balasore to the Commissioner, dated 23 August 1932.
21. WWCC file 56 (Orissa State Archives) Letter from the Collector of Balasore to the Commissioner, dated 9 .October 1932
22. WWCC file 56, letter from Collector of Balasore to the Commissioner, dated 2 October 1932.
23. Sudhakar Dash, *op.cit* ., p.ll.
24. Gopabandhu Choudhury, *Gandhi and Utkal*, p.69.
25. *Harijan*, 15 June 1934.
26. Routray, *op.cit.*,p.45.

VIII

FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN JAJPUR DISTRICT

"Imperialism built a system which interlocked its rule in locality, province and nation; nationalism emerged as a matching structure in politics." Though freedom movement in any locality was a part of the all-India movement in Gandhian era and should be assessed in terms of the policies and programmes of the Indian National Congress, yet the nature of mobilization which was dependent upon local milieu, situation and leadership should not be lost sight of. So far as local leadership was concerned, in many areas there were miniature Gandhis. The work which Mahatma Gandhi was doing at Sevagram near Wardha was being done by Gopabandhu Chaudhury at Sebaghar in Bari area of Jajpur district (then a sub-division of Cuttack district) who earned the epithet 'Gandhi of Bari'.

In terms of source material as well as actual mobilization Jajpur is entitled to have an important place in the historiography of freedom movement in Orissa. Researchers on freedom movement consult the memoirs, diaries and private papers of active participants in freedom struggle besides the official records and newspapers. Though such accounts are subjective in character and likely to have been coloured by personal feelings and bias, yet they give us intimate knowledge about the events in which freedom fighters were actively involved. About freedom movement in Jajpur we get such knowledge from the memoirs of three key figures – Ramadevi, Manmohan Chaudhury and Annapurna Maharana.[1] Some years back a freedom fighter of Jajpur, named Arttabandhu Mahanty who died in 1989 and his associate Dasarathi Samal (a patriotic singer, dramatist and actor) compiled data on freedom

movement in Jajpur which was later on edited by Sharat Chandra Maharana and published at Koraput. This book, entitled *Mukti Sangramare Bari Anchala* gives an account of freedom movement in Bari (which is now a constituency of Orissa Legislative Assembly), as well as biographical notes and where possible, personal statements of freedom fighters themselves. In his biography of Gopabandhu Chaudhury, entitled *Dhuli Matira Santha,* (Vidyapuri, Cuttack, 1985) Gopinath Mohanty, the well-known Oriya novelist has given some data about constructive work in Bari, collected from a journal, called *Gandhi Sebasangha Patrika*, edited by Gopabandhu Chaudhury, which was being published from Bari.

The Gandhian movement alternated between agitational activities like Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movement and constructive work. Constructive work, apparently meant for social reconstruction or nation building also had a strategic revolutionary significance, because it roused awareness among the people and the constructive workers also often took active part in agitational activities. Constructive work could be sometimes carried on within the framework of semi-authoritarian and semi-hegemonic colonial Government. For example, after the inauguration of provincial autonomy experiment in Gandhian scheme of Basic Education was launched with Government approval.[2]

Against the background of all-India nationalist movement the movement in Jajpur district can be divided into three phases – 1930-34, 1934-39 and 1940-45.

In 1930 Ramadevi addressed a large gathering in Bari. During the Civil Disobedience Movement some meetings and processions were organized in Jajpur. Some people engaged themselves in such activities as opium-picketting and cutting of date trees. Prominent among those

who participated in Civil Disobedience Movement at Jajpur were Balaram Pati, Bipin Bihari Mahanty, Gadadhar Dutta, Padmanabha Roy and Bhagaban Sahu. In 1931, for the A.I.C.C. session, proposed to be held at Puri, volunteers were recruited from Jajpur district, particularly from Bari. That session could not be held because of resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement by Congress soon after Mahatma Gandhi's return from the second session of Round Table Conference and the volunteers, recruited at Bari, among whom there were a number of women such as Krushna Kamini Devi, Pramila Sundari Devi, Nirupama Devi, Hiranmayai Devi and Priyambada Devi participated in the resumed Civil Disobedience Movement and went to jail.

After the withdrawal of Civil Disobedience Movement Gandhi advised Congressmen all over the country to take up rural reconstruction. At the end of his Harijan *Padayatra* in Orissa, at Bhadrak, he advised Congress workers to go back to villages. In response to this advice while Krupasindhu Hota and Gunanidhi Mahanty took up work in Beraboi village near Delang railway station, and in Dadha village near Barang railway station respectively, Gopabandhu Chaudhury and Ramadevi chose as the area of their work Bari, the flood-prone area, situated between the Kharswan and Brahmani rivers, where Chaudhury had done relief work as deputy magistrate during the days of Non-cooperation movement. In August 1934, when the river Brahmani was full, Gopabandhu and Ramadevi with a band of seven young women (Sushila Devi, Mangala, Shova, Godavari, Manika, Tulasi and Annapurna) came by boat to Bari, leaving behind his weeping old mother and other family members at Bakhrabad, Cuttack. Initially they stayed in the *choupatty* of Baman Charan Das, a local Zamindar of the Bagda village and later established their Ashram in a mud-built thatched house

in a plot of land donated by this Zamindar. The Ashram was named as Sebaghar (abode of services) by Mahatma Gandhi.

While Gandhians took up constructive work in villages, the Congress Socialists started peasant movement in the villages. They tried to organize the peasants as a class and set them against the Zamindars, as they aimed at abolition of Zamindary. In Sukinda, Dharmasala and Gadamadhupur the socialists organized the non-tribal and tribal peasants. Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Malatidevi, Duranga Charan Das and Surendra Nath Dwivedy addressed peasants in these areas. In Dharmasala there were local peasant leaders like Paramananda Mahanty and Baladeva Lala. On 1 and 2 September 1938 Cuttack district peasants' conference was held at Jenapur. The second day of the conference was celebrated as 'Dhenkanal Day'. On that day thousands of peasants from Dhenkanal attended the conference. The Jenapur rally gave momentum to the Prajamandal movement in Dhenkanal State.

While the socialists were mobilizing the peasants against zamindars, the Gandhian constructive workers were giving moral support to the oppressed peasants some of whom happened to be untouchable Hindus (Harijans) so that they would be able to withstand the zamindars' oppression on their own. The Gandhians also tried to settle disputes between the zamindars and peasants in amicable ways. They were able to settle the long standing dispute between the Ratnagiri zamindar and his tenants.[3] The very presence and activities of the Gandhians created a spirit of understanding between zamindars and peasants. Ramadevi writes : "We did not feel any necessity to organize the peasants against the zamindars' oppression. The latter's exploitation and oppression ceased automatically."[4] A local Congress worker observes: "Ever since Gopabandhu came to Bari all oppression has been stopped, and people have become courageous."[5]

Constructive work which included such items as clearing, horticulture, diary faming, preparation of *gur* (out of the juice from date trees), agriculture, *Khadar*, tanning, removal of untouchability, spread of Hindi and communal harmony aimed at making people economically self-dependent, and society free from inequality and exploitation. It had considerable social significance so far as the uplift of women and Harijans was concerned. Most of the workers of Sevaghar were women who were more capable than male workers of working among village women because of gender identity. Village women were also coming to Sebaghar to listen to discussions. Some girls, mostly daughters of Congressmen were coming to Sevaghar for receiving training in constructive work. In August 1938, according to *Gandhi Seva Sangha Patrika* there were ten women trainees in Sebaghar out of whom three were Congress workers' wives.[6] Sebaghar was surrounded by Harijan villages. Bari area also had a considerable Harijan population, most of whom were tenants at will and were exploited by the zamindars. The Sebaghar activities roused self confidence among the Harijan tenants who learnt to shed fear of zamindars. Some Harijans like Akrur Jena, Ratnakar Jena, Arjun Jena, Bhima Jena and Sounti Mallick became active participants in freedom movement. The Sevaghar workers – Binod Kanungo and Surendra Pattanayak worked in the Harijan villages. The Harijans were allowed to enter the family temple of the zamindar Baman Charan Das.

The experiment in Basic Education was quite popular in Bari. Some people donated lands for Basic Schools. The free atmosphere of Basic Schools was liked by the students. They were not afraid of their teachers as in ordinary primary schools.[7] The schools were attended by boys and girls of all castes caste Hindu as well as Harijan, though sometimes the caste Hindu guardians raised objection to sitting of their children with the Harijans.[8] The failure of Basic schools during

the Second World War was due to the provisional nature of the scheme and withdrawal of Government sanction from 1 March 1941. The closing of Basic schools by the Government of Orissa which was attributed by some to the alleged 'political bias' behind this system of education and by some to Governor Hubback's personal dislike for Biswanath Das who as Premier had introduced Basic Education and because of whose opposition to the appointment of J.R. Dain, the Commissioner as the acting Governor the former could not avail four months' leave caused surprise in some circles and was considered hasty by no less a person that Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India.[9] In other provinces of India such as Madras, Bihar, U.P., Bombay and Central Provinces the Basic schools were not closed in spite of resignation of Congress Ministries after the outbreak of the Second World War. After the official closing of Basic schools Utkal Maulik Shiksha Parishad was formed with Acharya Harihar Das as President, and Gopabandhu Chaudhury and Sharat Chandra Maharana as Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively (There were other members like Lingaraj Mishra, Laxminarayan Sahu, Radhanath Rath and Ramadevi Choudhury etc.) and some Basic Schools were run on non-Government basis. After the launching of the Quit India Movement these schools were closed and most of the teachers and some students of these schools participated in the movement. After the release of teachers the schools were started once again.

Two important features of Quit India Movement in Jajpur district are large scale mobilization of masses and popular militancy which resulted in subversive activities. On 27 August 1942 thousands of people (ranging between 10,000 and 30,000) entered into the compound of S.D.O.'s office in Jajpur. In August 1942 the revolutionary mob set fire to police uniforms in 26 places, 6 revenue offices, 4 post offices, 5 excisable articles, 6 zamindari *kutcheries* and 4 P.W.D.

bungalows. It is held that neither Gopabandhu Chaudhury nor Ramadevi nor their close associates, Gandhians as they were, incited the people to indulge in violent activities. On 26 August 1942 at Kalamatia before four people succumbed to police guns. Annapurna Maharana was persuading the agitated mob to avoid conflict with armed policemen who had already arrested some people. Popular military during Quit India Movement was a general phenomenon due to lack of leadership and official repression. Gandhi's call to do or die sounded militant to the people. About Gandhi's mindset before the movement, which was communicated to Congress workers at Bari by Gopabandhu Chaudhury after the latter's return from Sevagram in July 1942 Annapurna Maharana has given the following description :

> Under these circumstances in July 1942 Gopababu went to Sevagram. On return the he called a meeting of workers of Bari area at Sevaghar. In that meeting he told that Gandhiji is contemplating giving a call to countrymen to launch a movement. He has not yet worked out the programme of the movement. Bu the movement will be more severe than all others. His speech indicated that although this movement would be a non-violent one, he would not withdraw it even if acts of violence like Chaurichaura occurred. After this discussion we got mentally prepared for the movement.[10]

Constructive work itself was capable of rousing the spirit of confidence and fearlessness among the people in rural areas. This is very well attested by the participation of larger number of people from Bari area in the Quit India Movement as compared with other parts of Jajpur. As pointed out by Annapurna Maharana, while giving a call to Congresemen to go to villages at the end of Harijan *Padayatra* at Bhadrak Gandhi told them an allegory the hidden purport of which was that by working in the villages the Congress workers could make the rural people conscious of their leonine identity.[11] Distribution of leaflets, urging people to set fire to police stations, *kutcheries,* polices uniforms, violate forest laws and loot in the houses of rich men, which was organized by such

leaders as Surendra Nath Dwivedy, Nishamani Khuntia, Surendra Pattanayak, Binod Kanungo, Bhagirathi Das, and Krushna Rout roused the militant spirit of people, as pointed out by Gobinda Samal, a local Congress worker.[12] A number of meetings had been organized by Congress workers, which made the people restless.

An important legacy of freedom movement in Jajpur was the revival and continuation of Basic Education in post-independence era. In 1949 fifteen students were sent to Sevagram for having post-Basic training. In 1952 a post-Basic School was opened at Gomu near the river Birupa in a 26-acre plot of land, donated by a zamindar, named Motilal. It was shifted to Ramachandapur in October 1953. Subsequently the experiment in Basic Education fizzled out for different reasons. Freedom movement in Jajpur produced some social activists such as Krushna Prasad Basu, Birakishore Roy, Bhagirathi Das, Banchhanidhi Das, Paramananda Mohanty, Bipin Bihari Mohanty, Gadadhar Dutta, Baidyanath Das, Santanu Kumar Das and Brudaban Tripathi who played important roles in public life. From other areas of the undivided Cuttack district and other districts a number of Congressmen such as Acharya Harihar Das, Krupasindhu Hota, Harekrushna Mahtab, Gunanidhi Mohanty, Rajkrushna Bose (who had been assigned the task of organizing Congress movement in Jajpur in Non-cooperation days by UPCC). Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Malati Chaudhury, Surendra Pattanayak, Binod Kanungo, Surendra Nath Dwivedy, Manmohan Chaudhury, Sharat Chandra Maharana, Annapurna Maharana, Baikuntha Nath Mohanty, and Paravati Giri were actively associated with freedom movement in Jajpur district. A considerable number of women, belonging to Jajpur and other districts took part in the movement at Jajpur, particularly in constructive work and Basic Education programme. The constructive work at Bari brought into focus the role of women as social workers. Ramadevi became a

role model for them. The following women from other areas were involved in freedom movement and constructive work in Jajpur. Ramadevi (Cuttack), Mangala Sengupta (Dacca), Sunamani Devi (Puri), Parbati Giri (Sambalpur), Kshama Mohanty (Kujang), Sumitra Devi (Puri), Rambhadevi (Bihar), Tungavidya Devi (Balasore), Krushnapriya Devi (Rajkanika), Nimala Dutta (Remuna), Basanti Mishra (Patkura), Annapurna Maharana (Cuttack) and Annapurna Das (Balasore).

Notes and References :

1. See Ramadevi Chaudhury, *Jiban Pathe* (Oriya), (Granthamandir, Cuttack, 1984), Manmohan Chaudhury, *Kasturi Mrugasama* (Oriya) (Kahanl Prakashani, Cuttack, 1995) and Annapurna Maharana, *Amruta Anubhava* (Oriya) (Shiksha Sandhan, Bhubaneswar, 2005).

2. On 15 June 1938 at the direction of Shyamacharan Tripathy, the Director of Public Instruction, Government of Orissa, Mahesh Chandra Pradhan (Principal of Cuttack Training College), Sharat Chandra Maharana, Sub-Inspector of Schools, Cuttack Sadar Circle and Raghunath Mahanty of Bakhrabad, Cuttack went to Wardha for having orientation in Basic Education. Subsequently others were sent to Wardha for training in Basic Education. The Government of Orissa constituted the Board of Basic Education with Gopabandhu Chaudhury as President and Mahesh Chandra Pradhan as Secretary. Initially its office was opened in Cuttack Training College. Fifteen Basic Schools were started in Bari with the financial help from Government. On 1 June 1939, at Ramachandrapur, on the northern bank of Brahmani a training school and a practising school were started. The Basic schools had been started on an experimental basis. Because of the experimental nature of the Basic schools most of the teachers

who joined them initially subsequently relinquished their jobs. On 26 November 1939 P.T. Mansfield, the Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa visited the then inaccessible Bari area .(He went by motor car up to Indupur and from Indupur to Bari by cycle) to inquire about the Basic schools, and recommended the continuance of Government sanction for fifteen Basic Schools upto 30 March 1941. Actually the sanction was withdrawn from 1 March 1941. By that time except Sharat Chandra Maharana (the Secretary of Board of Basic Education) and Kanhu Charan Mohanty, the Headmaster (both of them were on deputation from Government) all teachers had left the training school at Ramachandrapur.

3. Ramadevi, *Jivan Pathe*, P. 119.

4. *Ibid*, p. 118

5. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha* (Oriya), p. 213.

6. *Ibid*, p.184

7. Manmohan Chaudhury, *Kasturi Mrugasama*, p. 190

8. *Ibid*

9. Sharat Chandra Maharana, "Swadhinata Purbaru Odisare Maulika Shikshara Prayoga" in S. Nath, et.al (ed), *Odisare Maulika Shikshara Prayoga*. Shiksha Sandhan, Bhubaneswar, 2001, pp 41-80

10. Annapurna Maharana, *Amruta Anubhava*, p. 273

11. *Ibid*, p. 221-2

12. Gopinath Mohanty, *op. cit.*, p. 252

IX

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT IN NILGIRI IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INDIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Nilgiri which now forms a sub-division of the Balasore district was, at the time of the independence of the country, a 'B' class feudatory state, belonging to the Eastern States Agency. Bounded on the north and north east by the Mayurbhanj state and on the east and south by the *Moghulbundi* district of Balasore, it was a small state, being about 284 square miles in area.[1] Its population, about 75,000 in 1947,[2] consisted of two main elements, Hindus (caste Hindus and untouchables) and the Aborigines. The Aborigines, belonging to such tribes as Kolha, Munda, Santhal and Bathudi constituted 15 percent of the total population,[3] and the Hindu untouchables formed nearly 10 percent of it.[4] Educationally the Nilgiri state was very backward. According to the annual report of the Nilgiri Durbas for 1943.44, in that year there were 33 schools in the state, out of which 24 were lower primary schools, 8 upper primary schools and only one M.E, school.[5] Till 1946 there was no High School in Nilgiri.[6]

Like many other princely states Nilgiri suffered from the misrule of arbitrary chiefs. The system of taxation was unjust and oppressive. The ordinary land revenue was much higher than that of the British-ruled areas. In Nilgiri, in 1939, the rent per acre of land was Rs.5/- which was a high rate as compared with the cost of living of those days.[7] Besides the high rate of revenue, the people were subjected to such illegal exactions as *magan* (forced levies on ceremonial occasions) *salamis* (presents) and *rasad* (cesses collected for the provision of British officials and troops passing through the state.)[8] Major portion

of the revenue collected from the people, legally or illegally, was appropriated to the coffer of the ruler. As it was found by the States Inquiry Committee, in Nilgiri, in 1938, although according to the state budget, the annual domestic expenditure of the palace was Rs.50,000/- out of the net income of Rs.1,50,000/-, the ruler practically managed to spend more than half of the state's income for his private domestic purpose. This could be possible, because there was no clear-cut demarcation between the public Treasury and the ruler's private Privy Purse.[9]

Besides the unjust financial system narrated above, the people of Nilgiri also suffered from the following other handicaps arising out of an arbitrary system of government.:

1. It was not possible for the public to secure authentic and adequate information regarding the administration, moral and material progress, as well as the social, economic and political conditions prevailing therein.

2. There was no Rule of Law. Even proper codification of laws was absent.

3. No fundamental rights of citizenship were recognized. Civil liberty was crushed and the people were daily oppressed with a feeling of potential danger to the security of life and property.

4. The peasants had no rights in agricultural land. They could neither sell, nor mortgage, nor transfer it without the permission of the authorities. High mutation fees were levied, even when permission was granted for the transfer.

The cultivator was a mere tenant-at-will liable to be ejected at the whim of the Ruler or the State authorities.

5. *Bethi* or forced labour for *Shikar* excursions and *Kheda* (catching of elephants) with its attendant evils such as the wastage of the peasant's time at the time of sowing and harvesting, and wastage of crops was prevalent in Nilgiri.

6. Interference by the State Authorities in the social and religious life of the people and the exercise of wide powers of control over them through caste *panchayats* and ecclesiastic courts impeded the march of progress and served as agencies of oppression.

7. There was no security of tenure for public services. Nepotism was widespread in matter of recruitment.

8. There were hardly any local self-government institutions, worth the name. Civic amenities were, therefore, non-existent.

9. The judiciary was entirely dependent upon the ruler and the impartial administration of justice was, therefore, not easily available.

10. "Nation-building departments" were systematically starved. The quality of what little work they produced was very poor.[10]

Not only the people were oppressed by the Rajah but also they were exploited by the *Sarbarakars* (rent-collectors), the *Lakhrajdars*

(those who enjoyed rent-free lands and constituted the aristocracy of the state) and the money-lenders.[11]

According to the Banamali Das who himself belonged to a family of *Lakhrajdar*, the poor aborigines used to pay to these privileged classes heavy interests for loans, free labour and vegetables free of cost.

The last ruling Chief of Nilgiri during whose time the process of transition from feudalism to democracy originated and attained successful culmination was Kishor Chandra Mardaraj. A product of the Ajmir College, the Rajah had twice visited England. According to Banamali Das who politically agitated against him, the Rajah was a patron of arts, sports and music, but he made himself thoroughly unpopular by openly indulging in drunkenness and debauchery with even tribal ladies.[12]

The growth of nationalism in the Balasore district whose headquarters, the Balasore town, was only 15 miles away from Raj Nilgiri, the headquarters of the state, had its repercussion among the people of Nilgiri. Consequently, from the beginning of the Gandhian nationalist movement, some people from Nilgiri became involved in it. During the Non-co-operation movement, from Nilgiri, Khirodananda Devagoswami, Lakshmidhar Mishra and Pranabandhu Agasti associated themselves with the Congress activities.[13]

As the twenties advanced, the increasing political consciousness, arising out of the Gandhian movement, tended to give a new dimension to the people's latent resentment against the unjust rule of the chiefs, Consequently, it was found that some conscious people whose number increased with the passage of time simultaneously fought against the Rajah's oppression and also took part in the nationalist movement. So far as the Congress was concerned, its the then promising young leader

from the Balasore district. Harekrushna Mahatab, as he pointed out in an interview with the writer, got interested in the Nilgiri affairs from the beginning of the Gandhian movement.

At the beginning of 1928, about 1,000 people, protesting against the injustice of the Rajah, left Nilgiri and came to Balasore. Their main grievance was that the Chief was again and again compelling them to give *bethi* or forced labour for the *kheda* or elephant-catching operation[14]. Their another complaint was the collection of *magan* for the marriage of the Chief's daughter[15]. In this unrest the Congress workers sympathized with the fugitive rebels from Nilgiri by providing them food and shelter[16]. Mahtab published an anonymous booklet called *Nilgiri Atyachar* (Oppression in Nilgiri) and distributed it which roused the ferment among the people. He also wired to C.F. Andrews, the Christian missionary and philanthropist, to intervene[17]. Andrews came to Nilgiri in February 1928.[18] Through the arbitration of Andrews and the intervention of the Political Department, a settlement was arrived at and the fugitives went back to their houses.[19]

From among the people of Nilgiri, Hadibandhu Raj played an important role in this movement. As Banamali Das pointed out, Raj was sentenced to imprisonment for one year by the Rajah on the charge of concocted goat theft for having played an important role in this movement.

Mahtab has made the following eulogistic remark about this movement: "To leave homes and go on self-exile as a technique of *satyagraha* was widely known all over India after the Bardoli *satyagraha* of 1930........ The people of Nilgiri and Orissa may justly feel proud of the fact they had learnt and implemented the technique earlier".[20]

By 1930, revolutionary consciousness had further spread in Nilgiri. The people who had agitated against the injustice of their ruler also took active part in the Civil Disobedience movement against he British Raj. An emotional link had been established between the agitation against the oppressive native chief and the movement against British Raj which gave protection to the chiets. In the spectacular salt *Satyagraha* which took place in the sea-shore of Balasore, a number of people from Nilgiri took part. We may mention below the names of the following persons of Nilgiri who took part in the Civil Disobedience movement- Bipracharan Mohapatra, Daityari Prasad Rath, Gajendra Nath De, Golak Nath De, Hadibandhu Sa, Jagannath Rana, Kalicharan Parida, Kasinath Mahapatra, Maheshwar Pradhan, Nimai Charan Chowdhury, Pranabandhu Agasthi and Pranabandhu Parida.[21] Golak Nath De whose name has been mentioned above was a pleader by profession. His pleader license was cancelled by the High Court for his revolutionary activities. He was the Secretary of the Balasore District Congress Committee and also a member of the Pradesh Congress Committee. He was a volunteer in the first batch of salt *Satyagrahis*.[22]

In 1932, being inspired by Congressmen like Harekrushna Mahtab, Sardar Surendra Nath Das and Golak Nath De, in the village Ayodhya some young men formed a social reform organization, called Yuvak Sakha Samiti (association of young friends) for promoting constructive works like spinning and eradicating social evils like untouchability. This association organized inter-caste dinners where food was cooked and served by untouchables. The Raja got enraged over holding of such dinners. In 1937 he instituted law suits against Hadibandhu Raj and others for organizing such dinners in "violation of ancient customs and usages.[23]

In the mean time states peoples movement grew in Orissa as a part of All India States People's Conference (AISPC). In June 1931, with the active help of AISPC, some nationally minded people from Garjats like Radhanath Rath, Balukeswar Acharya, Madhusudan Patnaik and Gobinda Chandra Mishra organized the first all Orissa States People's conference at Cuttack. It was chaired by an eminent member of central legislative assembly, named Bhubananarda Das. It aimed at promoting the welfare of states people in collaboration with chiefs.

This conference remained dormant till 1937-38. In 1937-38 the people's movement in several princely states, specially Nilgiri entered into a critical and decisive phase because of the second Orissa States People's Conference and the constitution of the states inquiry committee to collect evidence from the states people and prepare a report on their grievances. The second Orissa States People's Conference was held at Cuttack on 23 June 1937 under the chairmanship of Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Sitaramayya appealed to the Orissa States people to form Congress committees and come in line with their fellow country men in British India. This Conference called upon the Chiefs of Orissa States to confer upon their subjects rights of occupancy on their holdings and fundamental rights of citizenship. It also urged the rulers to abolish the evil practice of extracting *rasad, magan and bethi.*[24] In this Conference the states inquiry committee, consisting of Satish Chandra Bose, Balwantray Mehta, Baja Sundar Das and Sarangadhar Das (Convener) was constituted. The conference authorized its delegates to form people's *sabhas* in their respective states.[25]

The inquiry committee, mentioned above, was reconstituted by the working committee of the Orissa States People's Conference on 6 June 1938 with the following members- Harekrushna Mahtab, Lalmohan

Patnaik, Balwantray Mehta and Sarangadhar Das (Secretary).[26] Mahtab was elected as the Chairman of the inquiry committee on 20 June 1938

On 22 June the states inquiry committee reached Balasore to conduct inquiry into the Nilgiri affairs. By that time, in Nilgiri, a reactivated Yuvak Sakha Samiti had started demanding popular control over state budget, reduction of rent on land and right to cut timber from state forest, [27] and a state people's organization (Praja Mangal Sammilani), headed by Kailas Chandra Mahanty, a lawyer had been functioning with head quarters in Alasua, a village on the border of Nilgiri, which was situated in the Soro P.S. of the Balasore district.[28] After some time, with the support of Congress activists the Nilgiri agitators established an Ashram at Gariamal (in British Orissa territory) for recruiting and training agitators. From this Ashram Gaurachandra Das, the secretary, Balasore district Congress committee published and circulated a revolutionary news paper, called *Rana Dak* (war cry) and other leaflets.[29] In this Ashram there were non-tribal as well as tribal (Santhal) inmates. In August a primary Congress committee was formed at Gariamal[30] and Ashrams sprang up in some villages of Nilgiri like Ayodhya and Ishwarpur.

In July on the day of car festival, the tribal and non-tribal agitators raised patriotic slogans like *Vande Mataram*, *Inquilab Jindabad*, and *Bharat Mataki Jay*. Soon after the car festival the Raja got 116 agitators arrested.[31]

The states inquiry committee and the local Prajamandals which were formed in *Garjats* became the channels for the accumulated discontent of the states people. They now felt that they could voice their grievances in a forum instead of crying in wilderness as they had done earlier. In hundreds the people came forward to give evidences before the inquiry committee, but the chiefs not only refused to comply

with the communications from the committee but also adopted repressive measures towards those who came forward to give evidences.

On 21 July, in Ambadiha and Gariamal villages (situated in British Orissa) the meetings of Nilgiri people were addressed by Harekrushna Mahtab and Sarangadhar Das; the people were exhorted to support the movement against the Raja.[32] On 1 August the two leaders addressed a meeting of 2000 people (including 500 tribals) at Gariamal.[33]

Early in July 1938 an abortive attempt for compromise between the Raja and the agitators was made through negotiation between the Political Agent and the Dewan of Nilgiri on the one hand and the president and secretary of the Nilgiri Praja Mandal on the other hand. In the mean time the Nilgiri Raja's repressive policy added fuel to flame. As pointed out by Harekrushna Mahtab thousands of people spontaneously came forward and held meetings and processions to protest against the repressive policy of the Durbar. The Raja banned meetings and processions. Those who organized the meetings were fined, flogged and imprisoned. But the Durbar found it difficult to collect the fines, because if anybody's property was confiscated, hundreds of people surrounded his house and the police did not dare remove any property. The Durbar asked for police help from the Government of Orissa, but the Congress ministry refused to give police help for the alleged oppression of the people. Thereafter the Political Agent RL Bazalgette brought police from the Mayurbhanj state. The Political Agent was astonished to see the discipline and unity of the rebellious mob in Nilgiri.[34]

The movement in Nilgiri became particularly intense after the arrest of Banamali Das, the secretary of Nilgiri Praja Mandal on 4 August 1938.[35] Das, a popular young leader, twenty years old at that time had

recently passed the matriculation examination from the Balasore Zilla school

In the final stage of the agitation, at the advice of Mahtab, Sarangadhar Das, Nabakrushna Choudhury and Balwantray Mehta Kailas Chandra Mohanty planned to launch civil disobedience movement against the Raja. On 9 August 1938, at the call of Praja Mandal nearly 10000 people attended a meeting at Gariamal. The next day the people organized a procession in Nilgiri town. The police lathi-charged and fired upon the agitators as a result of which some were wounded. Being infuriated over this incident the people ex-communicated the Raja's family.[36] On 11 August, in spite of police obstruction and employement of elephants to scare the people away ten to twelve thousands of people attended a meeting at Gariamal. On 12 August, in spite of obstruction, thousand of people assembled in a meeting at Ambadiha.[37]

At this stage, Mahtab, Bazalgette and Solomon (the Collector of Balasore) made efforts for settlement. After much discussion among Kailas Chandra Mohanty, Dewan and Mahtab finally a settlement was worked out. Consequently the rebellious people withdrew the ex-communication of the Raja's family and the latter released those whom he had arrested and imprisoned.[38] The people were granted civil liberty and the right to ventilate their grievances before the ruler in a constitutional manner.[39] The practices like *bethi* and *magan* were abolished. But the Raja did not cancede the Praja Mandal's demand for the formation of state assembly and popular control over budget.[40]

The 1938 movement in Nilgiri was a success. As found by the states inquiry committee whose work was completed by 18 July 1939 only in two states of Orissa- Nilgiri and Mayurbhanj the people enjoyed civil liberties like freedom of speech and association.[41] Banamali Das observed that the successful agitation of 1938 strengthened the position

of the *Praja Mandal* which hereafter took an upper hand in the affairs of the state.

By 1938, as a result of the interaction and co-ordination between the *Praja Mandal* and the National Congress, the *Praja Mandal* movement had become a part of the nationalist movement. As Mahtab pointed out, some of the Praja Mandal leaders themselves were also Congressmen. The official report of 4 November 1938 made the following observation about the link between the nationalist movement and the *Praja Mandal* movement;

"A noticeable feature of most, if not all, these meetings is the fact that the British Government is described as the root of the trouble. The economic condition of the States' tenants appears to be forgotten and the whole agitation is apparently considered a part of the general struggle against the British imperialism".[42]

The States Enquiry Committee also observed: "Most of the States border on one or more of the districts in the province of Bihar or Orissa. The message of the great national institution, viz, the Indian National Congress and its leader, Mahtma Gandhi, has penetrated into the forest-bound hinterland of the states. The popular governments just on the other side of the geographical boundary of the states have kindled in the hearts of the States' people an ambition to deal with the problems confronting them in the same manner. The agrarian legislation of the popular cabinets has reached the fastnesses and jungles of *Garjats.*"[43]

The Nilgiri Praja Mandal endorsed the Congress party's demand for freedom on the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Kailas Chandra Mohanty took an active part in the Individual Civil Disobedience movement. He delivered an anti-war speech at Ambadiha Hat and was sentenced to six moths' rigorous imprisonment.[44]

Besides Mohanty, Bhagaban Puhan and Chintamani Naik also took part in the Individual Civil Disobedience movement.[45]

The Quit India movement of 1942 had a phenomenal impact upon the people of Nilgiri, for which they suffered repression by the Darbar. According to the annual report of the Darbar for 1943-44, the number of convicts in jail increased because of the participation of the people in the Quit India movement.[46] The following people mainly took part in the 1942 movement- Batakrshna Sarangi, Hadibandhu Raj, Kshetramohan Behera, Madhu Das and Chintamani Naik.[47] In the Tudigadia mob uprising which took place in September 1942 the people from Nilgiri took part and in this uprising some Santhals of Nilgiri were killed.[48]

From 1942 to 1946 the ruler of Nilgiri remained out of power on account of his inability to provide good administration to the state.[49] Full powers were restored to him a few months before independence. But the Government was well aware of his unpopularity and the fact that he would have to face agitation from Congressmen and state agitators in Orissa and in his state'. In an interview which the Rajah had with H.J. Todd, the Resident of Eastern States Agency, in July 1946, the latter told the former about his inability to counter such agitation effectively.[50] Soon after the complete restoration of powers, the Rajah started the move to counter-act the Praja Mandal party by forming a party of his own, consisting mostly of aborigines; he also recruited a number of Gurkha armed guards in his police force and obtained from the Eastern joint police force two platoons of the Punjabi Muslims.[51]

On the other hand, as the country was heading towards independence, the *Praja Mandal* party began to make preparations for wresting power from the ruler and establish a provisional government n the border of the state. They began to capture *thana* officers and

other state officials, raid the state graingolas and resort to picketting and social boycott of the state officials.[52]

In the meantime, the first session of the Orissa and C.P. Regional Council of the All-India State People's Conference was held at Cuttack on 1 March 1947. This meeting decided that democratic rule should be introduced in the states and that the states should act in collaboration with the neighbouring provinces. This meeting also elected ten delegates to the General Council of the All-India State's People's Confernce which included Kailas Chandra Mohaty, the Nilgiri Praja Mandal leader. To direct the Praja Mandal movement of the states in a systematic manner, this meeting constituted a Working Committee under the presidency of Sarangadhar Das. Kailas Chandra Mohanty was also a member of this committee.[53]

Shortly before independence, a local branch of the Communist party had come to prominence in Nilgiri. The Communist party in Nilgiri had been organized by Banamali Das, the fist Secretary of the local *Praja Mandal.* Das had been expelled from the *Praja Mandal* in May 1940 because of his communistic ideas.[54] Das told that he had organized a secret and underground Communist party in Nilgiri in 1940. From 1940 to 1945, he was in jail. Publicly the party started operating in 1942 because of lifting of ban. To quote Das's own words, in 1946, the Communists emerged as a 'striking power', for which they had carried on village to village organization since 1940. The Communists played two roles simultaneously; on the one hand, they joined hands with the *Praja Mandal* in fighting against the Rajah; on the other hand, they championed the cause of the landless labourers, mainly tribals belonging to Kolha and Munda tribes, against the exploitation by the privileged classes. As Das pointed out, though the *Praja Mandal* leaders politically fought against the Rajah's oppression, socially many

of them indulged in the exploitation of the weaker sections of the society, specially since 1938.[55]

While the Praja Mandal was carrying on its activities for the capture of power from the Rajah, the pro-Rajah tribal people began to take forcible possession of lands belonging to the non-aboriginal people and moved about the state with bows and arrows; they announced that the paddy fields belonged to them and that they would kill and injure anybody who dared to resist them. In the Praja Sabha (assembly of people's representatives) meeting, held on 3 August 1947 some pro-Raja tribal leaders questioned its legitimacy as it had no representative from tribals and declared that the state belonged to the tribals and that the non-tribals were outsiders who had appropriated the lands originally belonging to the tribals. They said, "We will occupy lands and oust you Oriyas. The state belongs to us. The Raja is ours. Quit the land."[56]

These loyalist tribals were led by a convicted criminal, named Sandhya Singh who had been released on 15 August 1947. The other tribal criminals who had been released along with him such as Dhunda Majhi, Ananda Singh and Dhunda Maharaj were also set to organize the pro-Raja tribals.[57] According to the press communiqué of the Orissa Government the Nilgiri state police remained indifferent to the lawless activities of loyalist tribals.

On 31 October 1947, when the District Magistrate of Balasore contacted the ruler of Nilgiri about the disturbance, the latter pleaded that he was unable to put down the disturbance with the small force at his disposal. On 29 October 1947, the ***Praja Mandal*** workers brought two dead bodies to the Balasore town, and also hospitalized two persons who had been injured. A state of lawlessness and terrorism prevailed in Nilgiri since the end of October. The whole administration of the state

was in virtual state of collapse. Mail service of the state failed to function. Even transport service between Balasore and Nilgiri was cut off.[58]

From the standpoint of the Praja Mandal and the Congress Government in Orissa, the tribals were instigated by the Rajah against the ***Praja Mandal***. The press communiqué of the Orissa Government held the following view; "The just or fancied grievances of the aboriginal supporters of the Ruler were exploited to put them in a rebellious mood and to induce them to imagine that the Praja Mandal party were responsible for all their shortcomings, for their inferior position in the economic and social life of the state and indeed for all wrongs done to them in the past.[59]

On the other hand "it was contended on behalf of the Rajah that the aborigines did not need any instigation from him; that their grievance were ecomomic."[60]

The Communists' role in the clash between the Praja Mandal and the loyalist tribals made the situation more complicated. Though they were no supporters of Rajah, yet ideologically they were sympathetic to the economic interest of the landless tribals many of whom supported the Rajah. That is probably the reason why Mahtab holds the following view in his autobiography about the Communists' role in the Nilgiri disturbances.:

"In Nilgiri, the Durbar's policy and also that of the Communists towards the tribals put them in such a rebellious mood that the rebellious tribals set fire to the houses of the non-tribals and forcibly harvested paddy crops of the latter and the tribal uprising assumed serious proportions. The non-tribals left their villages and came to the nearby villages in the Balasore district. A tense situation prevailed. The Communist leader Sharat Pattnayak met me and discussed with me

about this matter in the *Prajatantra* office. We discussed about solution. During conversation, I suggested. 'If the Rajah is removed, what might be the reaction?' He did not give due importance to this. Both of us agreed about the necessity to pacify the tribals. But if, once, they are excited, they become uncontrollable".[61]

Banamali Das holds that in 1947, the tribals were divided into three groups: (1) the rich Aborigines, mainly belonging to the Santal tribe supported the Praja Mandal, (2) a section of the poor Aborigines were anti-Rajah, anti-British and were opposed to their explotation by the upper classes, these Aborgines were under the influence of the Communists; (3) another section of the Aborgines were pro-Rajah and were opposed to the *Praja Mandal* agitators whom the former regarded as social exploiters.

Mahatab holds that the tribals were so backward that they did not understand A.B.C. of politics, and that they only understood their economic interest on which the Rajah conveniently harped to instigate them against the Praja Mandal.[62]

In any case, the Communists were opposed to Rajah for which they had a serious clash with the loyalist tribals on 12 November 1947. According to Banamali Das, in this clash which was reported in the Orissa Government's press communiqué as one between the Communists and the tribals, on the Communists' side there were 150 armed tribal volunteers out of a total of 200 Communists volunteers. The Communist tribal volunteers raised such slogans in their language as *Ara Taga Tainto* (long live red flag) and *Rajren Dalalka Hese Kape Hese Kape* (Kill the loyalists).[63] In fact the Communists had been able to win over some tribals, mostly Santhals and Kolhas from Rajas side. Bathudis mostly supported the Raja.[64]

But Mahtab's contention that the tribals, in general, had no understanding of the sophisticated ideology of the Communists may also be substaintianally borne out by this clash which was officially reported as one between the Communists and tribals.

In the meantime, the *Praja Mandal* party, in a meeting held on 1 November 1947, decided to serve an ultimatum on the Rajah that if he failed to suppress the rising of aborigines within thirty six hours, the *Praja Mandal* workers would take any action they deemed necessary for the establishment of peace and order, and that the tenants would take steps to place the administration in the hands of their representatives. It was also decided that the *Praja Mandal* party would form a provisional *Azad* (independent) Nilgiri Government Government under the leadership of Kailas Chandra Mohanty with effect from 4 November 1947. But at the instance of two members of the Board of Rulers of Eastern States Union of which Nilgiri was an acceding state, who visited Nilgiri on 3 November 1947, the *Praja Mandal* party entered into negotiation with the Darbar for forming a responsible government. As a result of this negotiation, the ruler of Nilgiri, by a public proclamation, invited Kailas Chandra Mohanty to form a popular government. It was decided that Mohanty would form a popular ministry on 14 November.

But soon the events took a different turn and the ruler changed his earlier decision. On 12 November, the clash took place between the loyalist tribals and the Communists. Fire arms were used and a number of persons were killed. On that day, the loyalist tribals plundered two villages and set fire to a number of houses. On 13 November, the Rajah informed Kailas Chandra Mohanty that instead of heading the responsible government, he would be one of the three ministers, and the other two ministers would be selected by the Rajah himself. At this,

Mohanty broke off negotiations with the ruler. As a result, the disturbance once again started, and a large village in the disturbed area was gutted.[65]

In the meantime, the Government of Orissa took serious note of the disturbance in Nilgiri and became apprehensive that the violent activities of the tribals of Nilgiri might excite the tribals in other areas to take resort to similar activites. The Government of Orissa, which was at that time headed by Harekrushna Mahtab, the veteran Congressman who had also played a key role in the Nilgiri disturbance of 1938, drew the attention of the States ministry of the Dominion Government of India to which Nilgiri had become an acceding member to the lawless situation in Nilgiri. About Government of India's concern for the tribal outbreak in Nilgiri, V.P. Menon, the Secretary of the Ministry of States at that time, later on, made the following observation in his autobiography:

> The greatest concern to the Government of India was the possibility that outbreaks among the aborigines might spread to those neighbouring areas in which they formed a considerable proportion of the population. They are easily excited, and being accustomed to the use of bows and arrows, are difficult for the unarmed plainsmen to withstand. Troubles with the aborigines had often broken out in the past and had cost considerable effort and expense to put down. It appeared that the time had come to take firm and immediate action if chaos was to be prevented.[66]

Following a discussion between Sardar Villabhbhai Patel, the Home Minister of India and H.K. Mahtab, the Prime Minister of Orissa, the Government of India, therefore, authorized the Government of Orissa, by its telegram, dated 8 November 1947, to take over the administration of Nilgiri and restore law and order in it.[67] But in view of the negotiation between the *Praja Mandal* party and the ruler, the Government of Orissa deferred its intervention in Nilgiri. The failure of the negotiation and the prevailing chaotic situation finally compelled

Orissa Government's intervention. On 14 November, the District Magistrate of Balasore proceeded to Raj Nilgiri with an adequate force to take over the administration of the state.[68] Mahtab gives the following description of the takeover of Nilgiri by the Orissa Government in his autobiography:

> On 14 November, as per the earlier plan, under the command of Mr. Senapati, Orissa Military Police marched to Nilgiri. On the way the villagers gave them overwhelming ovation. The Communists extended full co-operation. The fugitive non-aborigines were following the police force. The aborigines went to the Rajah. The Rajah contacted the police of Eastern States Federation, but they replied that they had received no order from their I.G. Moreover, they did not possess adequate arms. The Dewan and the police sub-inspector of the Rajah were on leave. All the officials of the ruler were absent. Giving prior intimation, Senapati met the Rajah, described to him the chaotic condition of Nilgiri and showed some photographs of non aborigine villages. The Rajah looked surprised. Then Senapati hinted that under the prevailing circumstances it would be good for the Rajah as well as his subjects, if the Orissa Government took over the administration of the state. After a little thinking, the Rajah agreed........[69]

According to a reliable version, while Nabakrushna Chaudhury the revenue minister and Nilamani Senapati ICS who was in charge of the action committee on Nilgiri affairs stayed at Balasore, Jayanta Ghosh, the journalist who had personal friendship with the Raja gave the latter the letter of Government of India, asking him to hand over the administration of his state to the Government of Orissa. The Raja thereafter consulted the authorities of Eastern States Union, to which his state was an acceding member, who advised the former to surrender. With tearful eyes he thereafter handed over the administration of his state to the district magistrate of Balasore; he issued a proclamation, expressing therein his gratitude to the Government of India for the decision to take over the administration of his state, and asking all the

state officials to extend their fullest support and cooperation to the new administration.[70] (This proclamation had been drafted for the Raja by Chintamani Mishra at the direction of Nabakrushna Chaudhury, the minister of revenue).[71] After the Raja's surrender the army marched to Nilgiri, and the district magistrate of Balsore, in a statement prepared according to the instruction of Government of Orissa promised to administer the state with strict impartiality, to deal out justice to all sections of the public and all citizens without fear or favour and to give special attention to the grievances of Aborginines.[72] While the accession of Nilgiri to Indian Dominion was legalized by the passing of extra provincial Act in Dominion Parliament, its merger in Orissa was finally implemented on 14 and 15 December 1947 according to the merger plan of the states ministry.

In conclusion we may identify the redeeming features of the popular movement in Nilgiri. First since the beginning of the Congress movement under Gandhi's leadership, some politically conscious people of the state simultaneously carried on their fight on two fronts; they fought with the Rajah for their legitimate rights within the state, and joined the Congress movement in British Orissa. Secondly, unlike the movements of other states, the movement of Nilgiri in 1938 was a substantial success. Thirdly, the movement of Nilgiri was mass-based and well-organised due to training and guidance provided by the Balasore district Congress committee. Quite a number of popular leaders suffered imprisonment and physical torture for the cause of democracy. Finally, in the last phase of the Praja Mandal movement, an unpleasant situation was created by the Raja's policy of recruiting a body of tribal loyalists and the tribals' susceptibility to easy instigation and violence. The Communists with their ideological sympathy for the landless tribals many of whom had been won by the Raja found themselves in an

imbroglio which was resolved by the timely political and military action of governments of Orissa and India.

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X

DHENKANAL MOVEMENT, 1938

The popular movements in the princely states of India against the alleged misrule of rulers gained unprecedented momentum and assumed a distinctly national dimension in 1937-38 because of two extraneous factors. First, the introduction of provincial autonomy in British territories and denial of states people's right to representation provoked them to raise demands for responsible government within their territories. Secondly, the fifty-first session of the Indian National Congress, held at Haripura in February 1938 assured "the people of the states of its solidarity with them and of its active and vigilant interest in and sympathy with their movement for freedom"[1] This Congress declared:

> The *Purna Swaraj* or Complete Independence, which is the objective of the Congress is for the whole of India, inclusive of states, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as has been maintained in subjection.......... The Congress, therefore, stands for full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states and deplores the present backward conditions, and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of these states.[2]

While expressing inability to give "effective help" the Congress extended "moral support and sympathy" to the movements of states people, "carried on in a peaceful and legitimate manner" and permitted "individual Congressmen" to render assistance to such movements "in their personal capacities"[3] Under such circumstances, the Orissa States People's Conference which had been formed way back in 1931 was revived and reorganized and the people's movements (known as Praja Mandal movement) in some princely states such as Nilgiri, Dhenkanal, Ranpur and Talcher assumed menacing proportions. The purpose of

this paper is to examine the character of the movement in Dhenkanal in which thousands of people out of a total population of three lakhs participated and a number of people were killed and injured.

While studying the character of people's movement in Dhenkanal in 1938 a scholar finds himself grappled with the conflicting statements of its protagonists and detractors. There are two important controversies on the role of external agency and use of non-violent method in this movement. On the one hand, the critics have characterized the Dhenkanal movement as a violent movement, ostensibly carried on in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the exponent of non-violence, inspired, instigated and engineered by the left Congressmen from outside. It may be relevant here to quote the view of B.N. Bannerji, a critic of the movement:

"That the upheaval is the direct result of outside influence is true beyond the shadow of doubt. Any attempt to understand the present unrest at Dhenkanal without a reference to the *Kisan* movement in the District of Cuttack in general and to the present rally that took place at Jenapur (a place, geographically very close to the border of Dhenkanal) on the 1 and 2 September 1938 in particular is silly to a degree".[4]

"We have found the Dhenkanal people violent. It is no wonder that they have been. It would have been a wonder if they had not been The Dhenkanal people could not be expected to be non-violent even for the sake of expediency"[5] Bannerji held the Congress Socialists responsible for the violent conduct of the Dhenkanl agitators: "It is already a recognized fact in the political history of the country that the leaders who are running the socialistic shows and command the campaigns are not quite good apostles of non-violence or of truth. Mahatma Gandhi has found it out and mourned the fact. It will be no wonder if the leaders who have taken upon themselves the responsible

task of training the undeveloped minds of the state people in the art of fighting for rights are themselves committing many wrongs and are infusing their new disciples with a spirit far different from truth and non-violence".[6]

Bannerji has pointed out that Gopabandhu Chaudhury, "a most orthodox follower of the cult of truth and non-violence" offered to resign from Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee protesting against the adoption of violence in Dhenkanal agitation[7]. On the other hand, Sarangadhar Das, the Secretary of Orissa States People's Conference regarded the movement in Dhenkanal as a spontaneous mass movement, led by the local Oriya-educated leaders who understood what they were aiming at, were "looking up to the Indian leaders to show them the way" and were avidly reading the statements and messages of Mahatma Gahdhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, which inspired them to make sacrifices.[8] He observed that the growing political consciousness of the Dhenkanal people resulted in the sale of Oriya news papers in hundreds in the state during September-November 1939[9]. About the adoption of non-violence he observed' that though the principle was new to them, they observed it "in the face of the gravest provocation"[10] . While Sarangadhar Das dismissed the charge of violence laid against the agitators by state authorities as falsification and criticized the latter for firing and *lathi* charge which, from the state authorities' point of view were considered necessary for self-defence and for dispersing unruly crowd, it was alleged by the state authorities that the agitators did not care for the state police which was small in number. Das alleged that some agent provocateurs were forging letters in the name of some leaders of the movement to incite people to take recourse to violence, that wearing *Khadar* dress and cap an agent of the state authorities was found "addressing a gathering to use violence against the state servants".[11]

In every princely state whenever any extra financial burden was proposed to be levied on the people there were protests. Towards the end of the nineteenth century because of the people's protest the Dhenkanal Durbar could not implement the proposed enhancement of rent by a new settlement. In 1922, led by Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh, Purna Chandra Mahapatra and Benudhar Panda people opposed enhancement of rent and modification of forest laws which were considered detrimental to their interest. After this opposition some leaders were charged with conspiracy and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Of them Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh of Garh Parjang emerged as "the natural leader of the whole state".

In Gandhian era the princely states of Orissa, particularly Dhenkanal came under the influence of nationalist movement. Some students of Dhenkanal High English School which had ben established as early as 1896. such as Harmohan Pattanayak, Laxmidhar Sahu, Dayanidhi Sahu and Gati Krushna Bhanja joined the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and came in contact with Orissa Congress leaders. Sarangadhar Das (1886-1957), the kingpin of the states people's movement in Orissa was a man from Dhenkanal, had his education in Dhenkanal High English School and Ravenshaw College, after technical education in Japan and USA and a career of sugar technologist in outside industries and failure of self-run sugar industry in Dhenkanal had settled at Cuttack which became the head quarters of states people's movement. Because of its good transport relation with Cuttack (by motor service between Cuttack and Sambalpur and Bengal-Nagpur railway service from Cuttack to Talcher introduced in 1927) Dhenkanal could draw the attention of Cuttack-based Congressmen. At a time, when the popular agitation was growing in Dhenkanal the left wing leaders of Cuttack, such as Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Malati Devi, Bhagabati Panigrahi and others were taking keen interest in it.

Sarangadhar Das was working hand in hand with these left-wingers. The reorganization of Orissa States' People's Conference in 1937, constitution of States Inquiry Committee, growing socialist movement in *Mughalbandi* areas, and open as well as secret circulation of Cuttack-based socialist mouthpiece *Krushak* acted as the catalyst of popular agitation in Dhenkanal.

In January 1937 elections were held for Orissa Legislative Assembly. The meetings organized by the Congress and Krushak Sangha before the election in *Mughal bandi* areas were attended by people from the *Garjats* which had common borders with the province of Orissa. Inspired by the speeches delivered in those meetings the *Garjat* people hoped that Gandhi would save them from the autocratic misrule of their chiefs. In June 1937 the second session of Orissa States People's Conference was held at Cuttack under the presidentship of Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Because of the presence of *Garjat* policemen at Cuttack and their surveillance only one hundred people from some of the twenty six *Garjats,* attached to Orissa could attend this conference.[12] Besides Sarangadhar Das who had made Cuttack his head quarters two persons from Dhenkanal - Harmohan Pattnaik and Krishna Chandra Nanda attended this Conference. The resolutions passed in the Conference asked the rulers to put an end to illegal exactions, excesses and acts of repression and introduce representative institutions on elective basis. The conference constituted a Working Committee for Orissa States People's Conference and a committee of inquiry for collecting evidences on the illegalities and oppression in states. Initially the committee of inquiry was composed of Satish Chandra Bose, Braja Sundar Das and Balwantray Mehta with Sarangadhar Das Secretary, Orisa States People's Conference as the convener. The committee was reconstituted by the Working Committee in a meeting held on 6 June 1938 with the following members -

Harekrushna Mahtab (Chairman), Lalmohan Patnaik and Balwantray Mehta). The Committee of Inquiry prepared a questionnaire in December 1937 for eliciting informations about the *Garjats.*[13] Collection of evidences on the basis of questionnaires marked the beginning of an unprecedented awakening in *Garjats.* Many from *Garjats* came to Cuttack to reply to questionnaires but usually requested the Committee of Inquiry to keep their names confidential.[14]

In the mean time discontent had been growing against the Dhenkanal Durbar ever since the assumption of reins of administration by Raja Shankar Pratap (1904-1965) on attaining adulthood in 1925. He was a minor at the time of his father Sura Pratap's death in 1918. From 1918 to 1925 Dhenkanal was under Court of Wards. Shankar Pratap had his education in Raipur Rajkumar College as well as Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. From the latter he graduated in 1926. In 1924 he had married Ratnaprabha Devi, the daughter of Aditya Pratap Singh, the Raja of Sareikela. The discontent against Shankar Pratap has been attributed by Braja Kishor Dhal, the Dhenkanal Praja Mandai leader to such factors as *bethi, begari*, arson, collection of illegal cesses, autocratic administration, rape, litigation on false charge, insult to respectable persons of the state and from outside, economic exploitation by imposition of monopoly over such items as rice, salt, kerosine, betel leaf, ganja, opium, lac, hides, tamarind, Kochila, sugar cane etc.[15] In 1932 the Raja built the Jatannagar palace worth rupees two lakhs (in those days) by employing forced labour and collecting materials free of charge. While Dhal holds the Raja personally responsible for all exploitation and oppression [16], others have attributed the alleged misrule to the officials around him. According to Rabi Ghosh, a Congress Socialist who participated in Dhenkanal *satyagraha* as an outsider, "the worst offenders" in Dhenkanal were officials like Nanda Peshkar, Sridhar Mangaraj and Durgababu [17]. R.N Singhdeo, the former ruler

of Patnagarh, and Chief Minister of Orissa, the brother-in-law of Shankar Pratap (the brother of his wife Ratnaprabha) described him as "a victim of his kind and tolerant nature which some of his officers exploited and misused"[18]. Dr. H. K. Mahtab, the former Chief Minister of Orissa who acted as a mediator between Shankar Pratap and his agitating subjects in 1938 holds the following view about him: "With this acquaintance with him for about three decades I think I can dispassionately describe him as a fine man with a fine brain and fine heart who could have achieved many great results if luck had favoured him in the beginning of his career as the ruler of a state"[19]

According to Sarangadhar Das, against the oppressive measures of Shankar Pratap many appeals were made by the people to the Political Agent who did nothing except sending them to the Raja who in his turn inflicted severe penalties on the appellants.[20] By 1938, outside Dhenkanal, among certain circles the administration of Dhenkanal state had earned notoriety for its allegedly oppressive character. In April 1938, at the invitation of the Head Master of Ravenshaw Collegiate School Rani Ratnaprabha came to Cuttack to preside over the prize giving ceremony of his school. At that time Raja and Rani were accorded welcome by some people in the town hall. Protesting against this invitation some leading citizens of Cuttack held a meeting in the town hall. The meeting was however disturbed by the students of the Collegiate School who supported their Head Master[21]

On 26 June the Committee of Inquiry arrived at Angul to collect evidences from Dhenkanal people. At that time more than three hundred people from such areas of Dhenkanal as Parjang, Palasuni and Upardesh Bisos appeared before the Committee of Inquiry in spite of threats and dissuasion by the state police. On this occasion the people voluntarily expressed a desire to carry on "long-drawn-out struggle" in a non-violent manner against the oppressive Durbar and formed a provisional

Praja Mandal as well as a working committee of 13 members.[22]

The leaders of earlier agitation such as Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh and Puma Chandra Mahapatra along with others now started mobilizing the people against the Durbar. Subahu Singh organized sacrifices *(yajnas)* and meetings simultaneously in Parjang and its neighbouring villages to mobilize people.[23]

Early in July 1938 meetings were held in the villages of Palasuni Biso for giving up chewing up of *pan* (betel leaf) as under the state monopoly over the commodity it was selling at a rate which was three or four times higher than that of Angul. As the *pan* boycott became successful (within a month the import of *pan* fell down by 95%), the people felt encouraged to hold more meetings.[24] Out of these meetings emerged the minimum demands of the Dhenkanal Praja Mandal[25] which were circulated in printed leaflets among the people between 11 and 20 August 1938.[26] The following were the minimum demands of the Praja Mandal - grant of civil liberties (right to form association, hold meetings and publish and read news papers), establishment of representative assembly, abolition of *bethi* (forced labour), *magan* (forced contribution) and imprest provisions, pro-tenant legislations, amendment of forest laws, abolition of grazing fees, abolition of export and import monopolies and appointment of inquiry committee to enquire into all cases of forcible seizure of land and collection of illegal fines during last twelve years.

While the Praja Mandai movement was gaining momentum the Dhenkanal Durbar adopted certain counter-moves such as concessions, creation of a loyalist party and repression. By the state gazette of 21 July 1938 and extraordinary state gazette of 11 August some minor concessions were granted to the people, a committee of inquiry was promised to be appointed to look into grievances against the Forest

Department. The following concessions were granted-abolition of grazing fee, right to use forest products, and exemption of the people of Saurik and Palasuni bisos from payment of arrear land revenue. As a parallel to Praja Mandal the Raja formed a Prajamangal Samiti with two representatives each from 900 villages of the state.[27] According to Sarangadhar Das the meetings of Praja Mangal Samiti were not well-attended, as the people regarded the Praja Mandal as their only representative body. To get the support of the *Lakhrajdar* (rent-free tenure holder) Brahmins he called them to a meeting in Dhenkanal town on 23 and 24 August 1938. He gave them concessions but threatened to withdraw rent-free tenures if they joined the Praja Mandal movement.[28] To prevent the contagion of rebellion the Durbar sought to isolate the Parjang and Palasuni bisos which were considered "the stronghold of popular movement" from the rest of the state by deployment of officers and policemen.[29] On 10 August 1938, in a public meeting held at Parjang, Harmohan Patnaik, the president of provisional Praja Mandal was not allowed to speak being served with section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. Patnaik was afterwards called by Durbar for discussion. On 23 August Subahu Singh was called by the Durbar for discussion. On that day the Raja and his father-in-law addressed a huge gathering and claimed that Dhenkanal was the lowest taxed state, meaning thereby that, there was no ground for the people's resentment. The people returned sorely disappointed and said, "We came for food and he gave us stone".[30]

In the mean time the Praja Mandai activists sought to solidify their organization and movement. Those who associated themselves with the state employees were treated as traitors and taken to task. In an emergency meeting of the Working Committee of the Praja Mandal

held at Kualo on 10 August 1938 Purnachandra Mahapatra, a veteran pro-people leader was removed from secretaryship for having travelled in Raja's car because of persuasion in favour of Laxmidhar Sahu.[31]

Some meetings and processions organized early in September outside and within Dhenkanal galvanized the Praja Mandal movement. On 1 and 2 September 1938 at Jenapur, a place in present Jajpur district, adjacent to Dhenkanal border Cuttack District Peasants' Conference was held. This conference which was addressed by Socialists was attended by thousands of peasants from Dhenkanal. The second day of the Conference was observed as the Dhenkanal Day. On that day a meeting of the Dhenkanal Praja Mandal was held at Jenapur. The people from Dhenkanal who had assembled there accepted the Praja Mandal as their mouthpiece. The earlier demands of the Praja Mandal were approved. A new executive committee and a working committee of fifteen members including the executive committee were constituted. The executive committee was to consist of the following persons - Harmohan Patnaik (President), Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh (Vice-President), Laxmidhar Sahu (Secretary) and Bhajan Sahu (Treasurer). The meeting ended with singing of national songs and such slogans as "Down with absence of laws in the *Garjats*", and "Up with the power of people"[32]. According to a protagonist of Raja after the Jenapur rally the Praja Mandal leaders delivered seditious speeches and encouraged the people to become lawless. As a result they deforested the forests and violated the excise laws.[33]

On 4 September 1938 in the Bhuban village of Dhenkanal State, according to official report a meeting of 5000 people was addressed by two Praja Mandal leaders - Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh and Krushna Chandra Nanda. Subahu Singh asked the people to organize themselves and contribute to the expenditure of States Inquiry Committee. Nanda called upon the people to join Congress in thousands

as through this party they could defeat the British Government which was protecting the Raja and get their demands fulfilled.[34]

On 6 September 1938, the Oriya New Year's Day people completely boycotted the Durbar by not giving the usual *Sunia bheti* (presents). This was the result of the spread of Praja Mandal network in the villages. Meetings and processions were organized in Dhenkanal on 7 and 8 September. A leaflet, titled *Ranabheri,* outlining the demands of Praja Mandal was circulated among the people.

On 9 September the Praja Mandal leaders expressed their desire to the private secretary of the Raja to discuss their demands or grievances with the Raja. The state administration pointed out that the Praja Mandal deputation would meet the Raja subject to the following conditions - (1) the deputation would consist of five persons, (2) there would be no outsider in the deputation, (3) all demands should be presented at a time and there would be no alteration afterwards, (4) meetings and processions should be suspended to create a congenial atmosphere for discussion and (5) boycott of state officials should be abandoned. The Praja Mandal executive accepted the first two demands; they refused to give any guarantee against the alteration of demands, expressed inability to suspend meetings and processions which were considered necessary to educate the people about their demands and did not agree to the allegation regarding boycott of state officials by people. Consequently the proposed meeting between the Raja and Praja Mandal executive did not take place.[35] The situation was basically one of conflict between royal authority and populist pressure tactics. Though willing to consider the people's grievances the Raja wanted to maintain his authority. As a protagonist of Raja writes. "The ruler on his part could not quite relish the demand, however willing he might be, to redress the genuine grievances of his people. It appears to us that the Ruler feels that his relation with his own people does not justify a demand

on their part but a prayer or petition in the proper form". [36]

On 11 September, at 6 PM. as a pre-emptive measure against popular outburst the Durbar arrested the President, Vice-president, and Secretary of the Praja Mandal and some members of its working committee. The news of this arrest roused people's ire. They came in thousands from the villages to the state capital, assembled in the Alasua Hat field and demanded the release of arrested persons. (According to the estimate made by a protagonist of the Raja the assembly numbered 15,000; see Bannerji, *op. cit* p.5. According to Sarangadhar Das about 20000 gathered in Alasua Hat field.) The Durbar tried to disperse the crowd by such methods as charges by horses, elephants, motor cars, *lathis,* butt ends of gun and bayonets and firing which was resorted thrice. The people refused to disperse unless Durbar released their leaders and started talks with them. On the evening of 12 September Malati Devi who had gone to Parjang to address a meeting on 11 th saw thousands of people in Garh Dhenkanal station. Out of fear, in the mid-night of 12 September the Durbar released the arrested leaders. In the morning of 13 September Nabakrushna Choudhury M.L.A. and Sarangadhar Das got down from train at Dhenkanal. They addressed the people, after which the latter went back to villages.

After the incidents of 12 and 13 September charges of violence were . laid against each other by the Praja Mandal and Durbar. Sarangadhar Das brought the following charge against the Durbar : "It was a regular reign of terror but the people showed no signs of violence. One of the Praja Mandal executive went to the extent of snatching the sticks from a large number of people and throwing them away into the paddy fields for fear that the owners might use them against the police"[37]. On the other hand a spokesman of the Durbar held that the mob "realized the helplessness of the state police force and started throwing brickbats and broken stones which had been collected near the road

side for repair works at the state officials and the police"[38] and that firing was opened as a measure of self defence. It is alleged that Sarangadhar Das and Malati Chaudhury, while addressing the gathering on 13 September, encouraged open violence.[39] According to Mohanti Bairagi Charan Das, while asking the people to defy the Durbar Sarangadhar Das told them: "Open training centres in every village and teach the youth and young men in the art of *lathi* charge and knife display. When our people are well-versed in this art we can then obtain our liberty"[40] It was alleged by the Durbar that the mob rudely handled Creffield, the assistant commissioner of police who was a old man above seventy as a result of which he fell down senseless, that Sadhu Charan Das, an assistant sub-inspector of police was mortally wounded and chased till he ran into a house in Domasahi where he was further assaulted and left alone, that at night a house in Domasahi was burnt by the Praja Mandal people as the Domas had helped save the life of Sadhu Charan Das.[41] About Creffield's injury Sarangadhar Das held that the former was sitting on an elephant, and that he fell down when the elephant was ordered to charge and people clapped as a result of which the animal took fright and shied.[42] About the burning of house in Domasahi Das held that it was done by an agent provocateur of the Raja.[43] Whatever may be the explanation given by Sarangadhar Das, on 12 September, as pointed by Baishnab Charan Patnaik, the Praja Mandal activist, the mob in Dhenkanal was in a violent and rebellious mood:

"The brief history of 1938 Dhenkanal people's movement is as follows. It exploded on 12 September 1938. On that day out of three lakhs population of Dhenkanal state fifty thousand had gathered in Dhenkanal Garh being armed with *lathis* (clubs) and surrounded the Raja's palace. The Raja had left the palace. The people were raising revolutionary cries and slogans and were determined to destroy the palace and return home with pieces of bricks. On that day the leaders

of Praja Mandal convinced the people to be organized in a disciplined manner in the villages and sent them back.[44]

After the arrest of its leaders on 11 September the Praja Mandal asked the people of state to socially boycott the state officials. The release of leaders encouraged the people in the interior villages to defy the state policemen and officials, who were asked by the Durbar to come to the head quarters. The Durbar simultaneously followed a two-pronged policy. On the one hand, negotiation was carried on with the Praja Mandal leaders. In response to a wire H. K. Mahtab came to Dhenkanal on 13 September along with Satyanarayan Sengupta, the Chairman of the Cuttack municipality for discussion with the ruler; on the other hand the Durbar collected 200 armed forces from the neighbouring states-Boud, Seraikella, Kalahandi, Patna, Keonjhar, Bastar, Khairagarh, Jashpur (all these states were members of Eastern States Agency) for dealing with insurgent people. On 20 September a contingent of 200 European soliders from King's Own Scottish Borderers regiment arrived at Dhenkanal. On 16 and 17 September negotiation between Praja Mandal and Durbar took place. The Durbar raised the question of people's violence in villages. While denying this allegation the Praja Mandal executive wanted a week's time to study the situation in the villages, but it was allowed only two days' time. During discussion the Praja Mandal leaders demanded civil liberties and responsible government .. On 19 September, protesting against the requisition of armed forces from outside the Praja Mandal leaders refused to carryon any further negotiation with the Durbar.

The failure of negotiation was followed by the declaration of Praja Mandal as unlawful (on 22 September 1938), armed police raids on villages which were considered to be strongholds of Praja Mandal activists. During raids houses were destroyed, property was looted, men, women and children were assaulted, and people were forced to

sign declarations of loyalty at the point of bayonet. On 26 October 1938 the District Magistrate of Cuttack reported eleven cases of molestation of women which had been registered in Angul Police Station by Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh and Girija Bhusan Dutta M.L.A. to E.R. Wood, the Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa. It was alleged that women were not only forced to surrender ornaments but also stripped naked.[45]

On the other hand, Praja Mandal gave call for exodus *(Hizarat)* in protest. As regards the number of refugees there is a wide difference between the estimate of Sarangadhar Das[46] (about one Lakh) and that of the officials (who reported that 3000 refuges came to Angul district from Talcher and Dhenkanal states and 8000 came to Cuttack district from Dhenkanal state.)[47] The refugees took shelter in the zamindaries of Sukinda, Chausathipara, Balarampur, Dalijora, Madhupur, Kalkala, Darpani and in Banki and Angul. Helped and accommodated by poor villagers in these places, the Dhenkanal people came in direct contact with Congress Socialist leaders like Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Devi, and could build up solidarity with the people in British territory. Some meetings were held for the purpose of indoctrinating the refugees in the principle and method of *satyagraha*. Sarangadhar Das addressed two meetings of these people and conveyed the message of fearlessness from Mahatma Gandhi when he arrived at Jenapur on return from Delhi on 1 October 1938.[48] *Hizarat* was called off from 1 October because of difficulties, caused by excessive rains during the last three days of September and because of the problem of taking care of babies.

After the withdrawal of *Hizarat* from 4 October for about twenty days the Praja Mandal volunteers carried on *satyagraha* in Dhenkanal. The programme of *satyagraha* envisaged non-cooperation with the Durbar and their officials, organization of branches of Praja Mandal in villages, enrollment of more members, training the people in the technique

of agitation. For twenty days batches of volunteers came to Dhenkanal town, and held meetings and processions in defiance of ban order. In retaliation the state police dealt with the volunteers ruthlessly; their clothes were taken away; their cooking pots were broken; many of them were arrested and jailed. Procession became impossible because of police cordon.

According to Sarangadhar Das during September - November 1938 sixty villages were raided by the police.[49] The first village to be raided was Garh Parjang, the village of Mahesh Chandra Subahu Singh. Subahu Singh and his family had already left the village before raid. His house was raged to the ground by elephants, food stock was scattered and valuables and cash were looted. Two villages-Kualo and Bhuban were raided twice. On 17 October villages, such as Balaramprasad and Murdangapali, situated near the Hindol Road Railway station were raided by armed policemen who injured six persons by firing.[50] On 21 October as a result of police firing in Tumusingha village 4 persons were killed and nine were injured. On 2 November in the small Harijan village of Katamunda the police firing left one dead and another wounded. This village was raided on the plea that some persons of this village had committed a dacocity at the instigation of the Praja Mandal leaders for securing funds for the organization.[51] On 10 November the Political Agent and S.D.O. entered the village Kandarsingha with a party of armed policemen, as the Praja Mandal had established a training camp in that village. The police resorted to *lathi* charge and firing. Consequently three persons lost their lives.

As a result of police firing in Bhuban and Nilakanthapur villages on 10-11 October six persons including a twelve year old boy, named Baji Rout whose name has been glorified as a great martyr for the cause of Dhenkanal state people's movement were killed. Nilakanthapur incident in which Baji Rout was killed either accidentally or because of

resistance to policemen was a follow-up of the police raid on Bhuban, a large village with a population of 8000, inhabited by small traders and artisans. This village which had been "the citadel of the revolutionaries from the very start"[52] had been raided on 24 September, when the villagers had deserted the village out of fear. For the second time, on 10 October, in mid-night, a magistrate and a police sub-inspector with an armed force of 40 men entered the village with warrant of arrest against eighteen persons. The police arrested eight persons and shot two persons dead. About the police firing in Bhuban on 10 October two contradictory versions have been given. According to one version, the police resorted to firing, as the people in "overwhelming number" "armed with lathis and other weapons" threatened the policemen and demanded immediate release of arrested persons, and a gun was fired from the side of the people"[53] On the other hand, Sarangadhar Das alleged that the police fired upon the people without any provocation:[54]

> When the police came out with the arrested men, many of the villagers had gathered outside in the lanes and the open spaces. They innocently prayed with folded hands for the release of their brethren who, they claimed were innocent. After several pleadings, without any warning, there was firing and one man from the crowd fell dead. Then the villagers prostrated before the police and prayed that there should be. no firing. It was raining and pitch dark. Some of the police flashed their torch lights and fired. It is reported that forty or fifty shots were fired. The police left the village at a running pace, without caring to count the dead and the wounded, not to speak of rendering first aid. [55]

About the use of gun by the villagers, which had been alleged by the Durbar in the Press, Das held that there was no such possibility, because no villager was in possession of any gun. With the arrested persons the policemen reached the Nilakanthapur *ghat,* two miles away from Bhuban to ferry across the river Brahmani around 3 or 4 P.M. By that time the villagers who had gathered at the ferry *ghat,* refused to

provide the service of private boats for the police to cross the river. The state boats had been sunk earlier. The police men forcibly boarded the private boats, cut their ropes, and while ferrying fired at the assembled people, killing 4 persons and injuring 8 others.[56]

While the policemen were accused of attacking innocent villagers, looting their property and molesting their women, the villagers were accused of trying to overpower with numerical superiority the small number of policemen who, it was claimed by the Durbar, resorted to firing in self-defence. Sometimes the policemen took advantage of the villagers' armlessness. Sometimes villagers could offer organized opposition to policemen. As an observer pointed out, "We understand that the people in the interior are still united. One blow of the conch shell or the blast of a trumpet can bring to action a large number of villagers at any hour of the day or the night"[57] About the courageous defiance of policemen by people in Kualo village Sarangadhar Das holds the following view:

"The men who were trapped in the tank found courage to come out; others with news of looting came there and complained to the officer who denied point-blank that there could have been any looting. Some of the villagers touched the bulging pockets of the armed police, removed their turbans and discovered ornaments and cash to the discomfiture of the police and one police officer. The men dared to do it because of their large number and the police submitted meekly because they were afraid they might be overpowered by the large crowd."[58]

On the whole there were six cases of firing in which seventeen persons died and 133 were injured. Hundreds were arrested. Some managed to abscond. Against the absconders some of whom came to Cuttack and Angul "to give news and take advice", with the help of

Political Department many extradition warrants were forwarded to the Government of Orissa "on false charges of theft, mischief, embezzlement of Praja Mandal funds and even outraging the modesty of women"[59]

While Durbar was continuing its policy of repression H.K. Mahtab made efforts for a settlement with the Durbar. On 19 October 1938 Mahtab met the Joint Political Secretary at Puri and placed before him certain minimum terms for restoration of normalcy, such as judicial inquiry into allegations of looting, firing and molestation of women since 11 September, appointment of a committee to find out steps to be taken for making the administration in princely states like Dhenkanal responsible to people, grant of civil liberties, abolition of *bethi, begari, magan* and *rasad*, abolition of monopolies on the necessaries of life, abolition of export and import duties, revision of tenancy and forest laws, codification of laws, removal of ban on Praja Mandal and repeal of repressive laws and removal of troops and extra armed forces from rural areas, and grant of amnesty to political prisoners.[60]

On his part the Raja called a meeting. of people, two from each of nine hundred villages of the state. (which was attended by 800 most of whom belonged to Dhenkanal town according to Sarangadhar Das, but 3000 according to official report) on his birth day i.e. 31 October 1938 and announced the following concessions - reduction of *bethi* tax, withdrawal of tax on betel leaf from 1 April, withdrawal of sugar cane license from the same date, free use of forest, non-imposition of tax on agricultural implements and free shooting (except of elephant). The Raja promised to give due consideration to introduction of self government.[61] On this occasion some prisoners were released, but many (200) still remained in jail. The announcement of concessions was conditional and liable to be cancelled in case of non-withdrawal of agitation. Under such circumstances the people doubted the sincerity of the ruler.[62]

The situation in Dhenkanal apparently quietened because of the repressive policy of Durbar by the end of October 1938. But within a few days opposition to Durbar found manifestation in two different forms-terrorist dacoities in the houses of those who were opposed to Praja Mandal for raising funds for the agitation and for chastisement of those loyalists, and agitation from outside by left wing Congressmen who had all along given support to the movement within Dhenkanal.

In December 1938, looking at the number of terrorist dacoities an observer remarked: "Though repression by the state has come to an end, oppression of people has assumed an alarming aspect. During the last month and the present there have occurred cases of dacoities the like of which it is said never happened before in the state"[63]. On 14 December 1938, the Superintendent of Police, C.I.D. Cuttack sent the copy of a telegram to the Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa about a terroristic dacoity, received from one Keshab Chandra Sahoo, an alleged victim which had also been sent by Sahoo to Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarojini Naidu, Private Secretaries to Viceroy and Governor of Orissa, and Resident, Eastern States:[64]

Outside the state of Dhenkanal the movement in Dhenkanal and the alleged repressive measures of the Durbar were being highlighted by the news papers like *Samaj, Krushak* and *Dainik Asha.* These papers were first openly sold and subsequently smuggled because of the ban order issued by the Raja. *Krushak* paper, run by Congress Socialists was giving good coverage to the movement and acting as the mouthpiece of the Praja Mandal movement. On 18 September 1938 H W C Robson, the Resident for Eastern States Agency ordered the intercepting of *Krushak* weekly sent to any address in Dhenkanal. The same order for *Samaj* was issued by the Resident on 11 October 1938.[65] Quite a number of papers published in *Mughalbandi* such as

New Orissa, Lokamata and *Deshakatha* were supporting the Dhenkanal Durbar and tried to refute the alleged misrepresentation of facts against the Durbar. *New Orissa* alleged that "papers which bake in the sun shine of the provincial Government are seen publishing undersirable and untrue accounts of happenings in states"[66] *Deshakatha* wrote in its editorial in the issue, dated 19 November 1938: "To speak the truth about Dhenkanal affair, the real situation is quite different from the ghastly stories which are being propagated in the outside news papers. Most of them are propagandistic. There are irrefutable evidences of the direct and indirect involvement of Congress leaders in this movement. It is an interesting fact. On the western side of Angul, in a market of Athmallik, a Congress leader is carrying on propaganda. We have heard this from that leader's mouth in a hotel at Cuttack. There is no basis of this movement beside instigation and tempting offers." It was alleged in that paper that many lies were being spread by the people of Dhenkanal (according to a prominent Praja Mandal leader) and that so-called loots, attributed to state police were actually being carried on by miscreants in the guise of policemen.[67] The publicity officer of the Dhenkanal state was issuing statements to the press refuting alleged lies against the Durbar. A pro-Raja spokesman, B. N. Bannerji brought out a booklet titled. *Dhenkanal Unrest: A Review,* published by Braja Sundar Das of Mukur Press, Cuttack refuting the charges of oppression and atrocities against the Durbar. Bannerji made the following observation about the nationalist press: "In fact the nauseatingly one-sided reports that are systematically appearing on the press have already produced a feeling of revolt in the minds of many and many now refuse to believe that the state authorities of Dhenkanal have all gone mad to shoot to death non-violent and innocent villagers"[68].

So far as Dhenkanal movement was concerned the left wing and right wing Congressmen took different stands. Left wing Congressmen

like Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Malati Devi, Bhagabati Panigrahi were actively supporting the Praja Mandal movement from outside by holding public meetings in Cuttack and Angul and finally organizing *satyagraha* in Dhenkanal state itself. The detractors of the Praja Mandal movement held these left wing Congressmen responsible for the violent character of Praja Mandal movement which was ostensibly being carried on in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the exponent of non-violence. Although Nabakrushna Chaudhury denied advocacy of violence by socialists, among them there were Communists who did not believe in non-violence. As Manmohan Chaudhury observes: "It is not known for certain whether people committed acts of violence in Dhenkanal movement. Such cases might have been stray and ordinary. But I noticed some people among Congress Socialists, later on found to be Communists, who were always laughing at Gandhian principles and considered such incidents as firing and *lathi* charge as great achievements"[69] Among right wing Congressmen H.K. Mahtab who was not actively involved in the agitational programme was appointed by the Congress Government of Orissa to facilitate the negotiation of settlement between the Raja and subjects. Mahtab's role as mediator was at that time criticized by Sarangadhar Das (See confidential file no. 259 of 1938, accession no. 1008, OSA). Subsequently S.N. Dwivedy observed about Mahtab's role in his autobiography in the following words: "In my opinion Mahtab babu caused a great harm to the Dhenkanal movement by initiating a move for compromise with the Durbar when the movement had already reached a decisive stage.[70]

Biswanath Das, another right wing Congressman who was the Prime Minister of Orissa was under pressure from the Political Department and the Dhenkanal state authorities for help in the suppression of Praja Mandal activities within and outside. Though sympathetic to the cause of Praja Mandal he took mostly a non-

interventionist stand which was criticized by Sarangadhar Das. He did not accede to the requests of Dhenkanal and Nilgiri durbars to render police help in the suppression of agitational activities [71]. When, on 17 November 1938 the Resident alleged that there were camps in the *Mughalbandi* for training Praja Mandal agitators and asked for the Congress government's help in the suppression of pamphlets like *Ranabheri* and anti-state news papers like *Krushak* and *Samaj*, Das replied that it was not possible under existing law [72]. In the final stage, when Mahatma Gandhi who was earlier a non-interventionist in state matters made the following statement in *Harijan:* "I feel that the ministers in the provinces are morally bound to take notice of gross misrule in the states within their borders and to tender advice to the Paramount Power as to what, in their opinion should be done. The Paramount Power, if it is to enjoy friendly relations with the provincial ministers is bound to give sympathetic ear to their advice" [73] Biswanath Das requested the Political Department to issue "an authoritarian declaration" "assuring the state subjects and the public in general proper administration in the states as also an inquiry regarding shootings in Dhenkanal, Talcher and Athagada" which "would very much strengthen our hands by assuring public opinion in Orissa" [74]. Godabarish Mishra, another right wing Congressman who initially criticized Dhenkanal Durbar's policy in a meeting at Puri on 22.0ctober 1938 subsequently supported the state chiefs through his mouthpiece *Lokamafa* for which in a public meeting organized at Siko, Begunia (P .S) on 5 December 1938 by the leftists like Gangadhar Paikray a resolution was passed demanding his resignation from assembly and Congress organization[75]. Congressmen in general, barring the leftists, were not interested in states people's movements. In a meeting held in Cuttack town hall on 2 December 1938 Pranakrushna Padhiary deplored the antipathy of educated Congressmen, and apathy of the important daily *Samaj* in advocating the cause of states people. [76]

As the movement in Dhenkanal gained momentum the leftist Congressmen held meetings at Cuttack and .other places for criticizing the Dhenkanal Durbar and giving moral support to the Praja Mandai people. On 17 September 1938 in a public meeting, held in Cuttack town hall Sarangadhar Das, Nabakrushna Chaudhury and others criticized the Dhenkanal Durbar. Sarangadhar Das questioned the correctness of the bulletin issued by the Durbar and alleged that on 12 September as a result of police firing four persons had been killed. He also deprecated Mahtab's attempts to bring about compromise between the Durbar and subjects[77]. On 25 September 1938 another meeting, attended by 300 persons most of whom were students was held in Cuttack town hall under the chairmanship of Pranakrushna Padhiary. The chairman and others such as Harihar Mahapatra, Pyari Shankar Roy, MLA, Rajkrushna Bose MLA, Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Surendra Nath Dwivedy condemned the misrule of Dhenkanal Durbar and criticized the Government of India for sending troops to Dhenkanal and Talcher. Padhiary criticized the Congress ministry of Orissa for remaining silent on the Dhenkanal issue and not asking for the immediate withdrawal of troops[78].

The firing incidents at Bhuban and Nilakanthapur on 10-11 Oct. 1938 greatly stirred the sentiments of people at Cuttack. Six dead bodies (of Guri Naik, Raghu Naik, Baji Rout, Hrushi Pradhan, Laxman Mallick, and Nata Mallik) which were in a state of putrefaction were brought by boat to Jenapur, and from there to Cuttack by rail were placed in separate bullock carts and were marched through the streets of Cuttack in a grand procession before post mortem.[79] After post mortem some socialist comrades (Shachi Routray, Ananta Patnaik, Rabi Ghosh, Motilal Tripathy, and Gobinda Mahanty) cremated them at Khan Nagar near the Kathjudi river on 13 October 1938. The funeral fire roused the poetic emotion of Routray who later on at home wrote his famous

poem, titled *Baji Rout.* (In 1938 the poem was published in *Sahakar* and later on in the form of a booklet it was published from Cuttack on 9 March 1941.) On 14 October 1938 a meeting was held at Cuttack (According to official report it was attended by 200 people) under the charmanship of Sarangadhar Das. Das refuted the charge of violence against the villagers in Bhuban. Nabakrushna Chaudhury refuted the allegations that the socialists were preaching violence and that the Jenapur rally had excited the people of *Garjats.* He held the British Government (i.e. the Political Agent and Resident) responsible for creating trouble in Dhenkanal by using the Raja as an instrument.[80] On 22 October 1938, in a meeting held at Puri some politicians such as Mohan Das M.L.A, Prananath Patnaik M.L.A., Godavarish Mishra, MLA, Gatikrushna Swain and Bhubaneswar Mishra condemned the Raja of Dhenkanal for his repressive policies.[81] On 25 October 1938, addressing a public meeting (of 5000 people) at Amruta Manohi Padia in Jadupur near Jenapur Nabakrushna Chaudhury held that the movement in Dhenkanal was not only supported by Congress Socialists but also by the Congress party as a whole. He advised the people of Dhenkanal to carryon their movement for responsible government in a non-violent manner. But Phani Pal, a Congress Socialist indirectly urged for recourse to violence on the plea that patience for a non-violent movement had exhausted.[82] On 27 October 1938 in the Budhapank village of Angul P.S. the Congress leader Pranakrushna Padhiary, presided over a meeting of 4000 Dhenkanal subjects which was addressed by outside politicians (Girija Bhusan Dutta, Raghunath Mohanty, Mohan Das and Biswanath Pasait) and local Praja Mandal activists like Baishnab Charan Patnaik, Purnachandra Mahapatra and Maheswar Subahu Singh.[83] On 29 October 1938 All Utkal Garjat Day was observed in Cuttack and Angul. On this occasion there were *hartals* in both the towns. At Cuttack, led by leftists like Ananta Charan Patnaik, Sarangadhar Das, Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Bhagabati Panigrahi and Bharat Singh a

procession moved about for two hours. Carrying Congress flags the processionists shouted slogans and sang songs against the oppression in Dhenkanal. In the evening there was a meeting, attended by 500 people under the chairmanship of Bhagirathi Mahapatra. The speakers- Prananath Patnaik, MLA, Sarangadhar Das, Pyarishankar Roy, Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Shyam Sunder Mishra (of Servants of India society) held the Britsh Government responsible for oppression in states, and asked the people to support the movements in states. They held that the federal scheme of the Government of India act, 1935 which denied the states people the right to representation and the Princes Protection Act must be opposed by the Congress at any cost, and if necessary by civil disobedience movement.[84]

On 20 November 1938 a special branch officer reported to the Government about the plan of *satyagraha* from outside in the following words:

"The socialists of Orissa have decided to take up the Dhenkanal cause in earnest. Hitherto the *satyagraha* movement in Dhenkanal and other states were taken up by the residents of states at the instance of the Congress Socialists .. Now fearing that there were signs of set - back in the movement the Orissa Socialists headed by Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Mrs. Malati Chaudhury have resolved to go in batches inside the states to offer *satyagraha.* They are following the line of action of the Hyderabad agitation. Provisionally three batches have been fixed up.[85]

On 2 December 1938, on the eve of the departure of the first batch of *Sayagrahis* led by Nabakrushna Chaudhury a meeting was held in the Cuttack town hall under the chairmanship of Prananath Patnaik. Patnaik condemned the oppressions in states and held the British government responsible for them. Addressing this meeting

Padhiary asked the students to join the movements in states. The same day in the Budhapank village of Angul P.S., a meeting, held under the chairmanship of Girija Bhusan Dutta (attended by 700 people) was addressed by the leftists-Rabi Ghosh, Banamali Das and Bhagabati Panigrahi. Rabi Ghosh demanded impartial inquiry into allegations against the Dhenkanal Durbar in view of the fact that 18 people have been killed as a result of police firing. Bhagabati Panigrahi held that as the British government was at the back of oppression in the states, the people in British territory should come forward to help the states people and thereby fight against the British Government indirectly. He pointed out that as news paper agents and outsiders were not allowed to go to the states the Congressmen should join movements in states and expose the actual character of Britishers who were boasting throughout the world that they were civilized. On 3 December 1938 Nabakrushna Chaudhury led the first batch of *satyagrahis.* On 4 December, in the Parjang area of Dhenkanal, Bhagabati Panigrahi organized *satyagraha.* Subsequently *satyagrahas* were led by others such as Gouranga Charan Das, Ananta Patnaik, Gokul Chandra Roychudamani, Pandit Laxminarayan Mishra and others. Chaudhury and Panigrahi were treated well. They were arrested and released, but their local followers were detained. Subsequent *satyagraha* leaders were treated roughly. Gouranga Charan Das was severely beaten. Ananta Patnaik and Rabi Ghosh were tortured in Madhi jail. [86]

The *satyagraha* by outsiders had to be stopped because of Gandhi's directive, even though the leftist leaders were even, contemplating violating Gandhi's directive. The murder of Bazalgette the Political Agent in Ranpur state on 5 January 1939 gave a setback to the movements in the princely states in general.

On 26 June 1939 Dhenkanal Durbar announced its plan of representation at three *levels-panchayats* in villages, *Praja Sabha* in

Tahsils and *Praja Parishad* at the centre. But the Raja did not adopt a conciliatory attitude towards his people and wanted to keep them under firm control. He did not declare amnesty for all political prisoners; nor did he withdraw warrant of arrest. He only ordered remission of six months for them. He wanted to have fifty percent members of *Praja Sabha* and *Praja Parishad* nominated by himself. Hence the discontent of the people was not extinguished; it remained like ember under ashes, and sparked out again in 1942 and 1947. The British authorities (the Political Department) withdrew the powers of the Raja of Dhenkanal and appointed Khan Bahadur AK Khan as Dewan with full powers of administration in 1939 on the basis of reports of the Military Intelligence Bureau on the state of affairs in the state.[87]

The Dhenkanal movement of 1938 created a sensation all over Orissa. As Sarangadhar Das observed: "I know of many other states where there is the same political ferment; but they are all waiting for the settlement of the issue in Dhenkanal. When they rise they will rise as one man-caste people, Harijans and aborigines."[88] The movement had a strong local base and leadership. Even at the grass root level ordinary people like untouchables were engaged in organisising the Praja Mandal movement.[89] The people were considerably mobilized by meetings and processions and stirred by singing of revolutionary songs, composed by Sachi Routroy, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi. Ananta Patnaik and Manmohan Mishra along with those of Banchhanidhi Mohanty and Birakishor Das. Malati Devi, the Congress Socialist used to inspire people and workers by singing such songs. Some Praja Mandal workers like Lal Muhammad and Bhajaman Sahu were singing in meetings and processions with the help of harmonium. M.A. Hamid was moving from village to village singing self composed songs on oppression in Dhenkanal and selling his booklet. As a result of the revival and reorganization of Orissa States People's Conference in and after 1937

and keen interest of Socialists in states people's movement the Dhenkanal movement of 1938 got strong political and moral support from outside. The local leaders received guidance and inspiration from Congress Socialist leaders like Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Devi and Sarangadhar Das. The movement can not be regarded as wholly non-violent or violent. Popular violence during the movement was partly due to the fact that ignorant and illiterate masses were not properly trained in non-violence and partly due to the repressive policy of the Durbar. While carrying on *Hizarat* and *satyagraha* in Gandhian line the people evolved their own methods of opposition like social boycott of state policemen and officials, overpowering handful of policemen with superiority in number and terrorist dacoities. The Raja, with the support of Political Department, followed the policy of repression, limited concession and divide and rule. In fact he was playing a losing game because the Paramount Power upon whose support he was dependent was fast losing its hegemony and legitimacy before the forces of democracy and nationalism. While states people's movement was becoming part and parcel of nationalist movement, the radical forces within the nationalist camp were trying to pull down princely order. Even Mahatma Gandhi who earlier advocated non-intervention in the affairs of states asked the rulers to introduce responsible governments: "There is no half way house between total extinction of the states and the princes making themselves responsible for the administration of their states and themselves becoming trustees for the people, taking an earned commission for their labours"[90].

Notes and references

1. *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol.I, P.300

2. *Ibid*, P. 299

3. *Ibid*, pp. 299-300
4. B.N. Bannerji, *Dhenkanal Unrest: A Review,* National Publicity Bureau, Cuttack (Printed and published by Braja Sudar Das, Mukur press), 1938, P.3
5. *Ibid*, P.12
6. *Ibid*, P.4
7. *Ibid*, P.9
8. AICC file, G 35, Part II, 1938, (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, hereafter NMML), Sarangadhar Das' report to AICC, dated 27 November 1938, f 33.
9. Ibid
10. Ibid, f 35
11. Ibid, ff13-14
12. Ibid, f.2
13. Ibid, f.3
14. The depositions of the witnesses from Dhenkanal and Keonjhar were stolen away by one Brundaban Dhal who was working as an assistant with the States Inquiry Committee. Actually Dhal who had been successful in winning the confidence of H.K. Mahtab, the Chairman of Inquiry Committee who had promised the former a job in some department of Government had been appointed as a spy by the Raja of Dhenkanal against the Inquiry Committee. While carrying the Dhenkanal and Keonjhar file to Lalmohan Patnaik, a member of the Committee from Mahtab he left Cuttack without doing the work assigned to him (see letter from H.K Mahtab to Balwantray Mehta, dated 8 August, 1938 AISPC file 127/1937-38, NMML).

15. Brajakishore Dhal, *Bhulibu Nahin*, Bhubaneswar 1980, P.80
16. *Ibid*
17. Confidential file 286, special section of 1938, (Accssion No. 1031, Orissa State Archives, hereafter OSA),. Rabi Ghosh made this remark while addressing a meeting in Cuttack Town Hall on 2 December 1938.
18. *Souvenir,* brought out on the occasion of the first death anniversary of Raja Shankar Pratap, P. 11.
19. *Ibid,* P.1
20. AICC file, G 35, Part II 1938 (N MM L) ff 1 &2
21. Confidential file 200 of 1938 (Accession 999 OSA)
22. AICC file G 35, Part II, 1938 (NMML) ff 4-5
23. Dhal, *op. cit.,* P 83
24. AICC file G 35, Part II, 1938 (NMML) ff 4-5
25. Ibid, Appendise C
26. Ibid. f.5
27. Sadashiba Pradhan, *Agrarian and Political Movements, States* of *Orissa:* 1931 *to* 1949, New Delhi, 1986, P. 104
28. Bijay Chandra Rath, *Unrest in Princely States* of *Orissa: Dhenkanal and Talcher* (1938-1947) Cuttack, 1993, P 157
29. *Ibid,P.154*
30. AICC file G 35, Part II 1938 (NMML), f 8
31. Rath, *op.cit*. PP 155-157
32. AISPC file 127/1937-40 (NMML) statement to press by R Kapadia, General Secretary, AISPC, Bombay, dated 14 Setp.

1938.

33. Bannerji, *op.cit.*, p. 4
34. Confidential file no. 254 of 1938 (Accession 1009 OSA)
35. Ibid
36. Banerji, *op.cit.* P5
37. AICC file G 35, Part 111938 (NMML), f 10
38. Bannerji, *op. cit,* p.6
39. *Ibid*
40. Confidentail file 237/1938 (Accession no. 942, OSA), letter from Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, to HWC Robson, Resident, Eastern states, 17 Oct., 1938
41. Bannerji, *op.cit,* p.6
42. AICC file G 35, Part II, 1938, (NMML), f. 14
43. Ibid
44. Shailaja Rabi (ed.) *Malati Devi: Chaudati Chitrapata* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1989, P. 27.
45. Confidential file No. 219 of 1938, (Accession 219 OSA) from District Magistrate, Cuttack to ER Wood, Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, dated 26 Oct, 1938.
46. AICC file G 35, Part II, 1938 (NMML), f 17
47. Home Political 18/9/38 (National Archives of India) letter from ER Wood, Chief Secretary, Government Orissa, to J A Thorne, Home Secretary, Government of India, dated 3 Oct 1938.
48. AICC file G 35, Part II, 1938 (NM M L), f 18.
49. Ibid

50. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 20 Oct 1938
51. Rath, *op.cit.*, p. 423
52. Bannerji, *op. cit.*, p. 10
53. *Ibid*
54. AICC file G 35, part II, 1938 (NMML) f. 22
55. Ibid
56. Rath, *op.cit,* p. 184
57. Bannerji, *op.cit.* p.9
58. AICC file G 35, part 11,1938 (NMML), f 23
59. Ibid, f 32
60. Ibid, ff 30-31
61. Confidential 219 of 1938 (Accession no. 924 OSA)
62. Rath *op. cit,* p. 188
63. B.N. Bannerji, *Supplement to Dhenkanal Unrest,* Cuttack 1938, p-3
64. Confidential 219 of 1938 (Accession no. 924 OSA)
65. Home Political 32/7 / 1938 (National Archives of India)
66. *New Orissa,* 20 Sept. 1938
67. *Deshakatha,* 19 Nov, 1938
68. B.N. Bannerji, *Dhenkanal Unrest:* A *Review,* P.11
69. Manmohan Chandhuri, *Kasturi Mruga Same* (Oriya) Cuttack, 1995, p. 188
70. Surendra Nath Dwibedi, Mo *Jibana Sangram* (Oriya),

Cuttack, 1984, pp 87-88

71. *New Orissa,* 20 Sept. 1938
72. Confidential file no. 279 of 1938, (Accession 1027 OSA) Conference with the Resident, Eastern States Agency, 17 Nov 1938.
73. *Harijan,* 3 December 1938
74. Confidential file No. 38/1939 (Accession no. 1097 OSA) Note by Prime Minister B.N. Das dated 17 January 1939
75. Confidential file no. 286 of 1938 (Accession 1031 OSA)
76. Ibid
77. Confidential file no. 259 of 1938, (Accession no. 1008 OSA)
78. Ibid
79. B.N. Bannerji, *Dhenkanal Unrest: A Review,* p. 12
80. Confidential file no. 259 of 1938 (OSA)
81. Confidential file no. 219 of 1938 (Accession no. 924 OSA)
82. Confidential file no. 253 of 1938 (Accession 1002, OSA)
83. Confidential file no. 219 of 1938 (Accession no 924 OSA)
84. Ibid
85. Confidential file no. 286 of 1938 special section (Accession no. 1031 OSA)
86. Ibid
87. Pradhan, *op. cit*, p. 112
88. AICC file G 35, Part II, 1938 (NMML), f 35
89. Ibid
90. *Harijan,* 3 December 1938

XI

THE MURDER OF AN ENGLISH POLITICAL AGENT : THE STUDY OF A VIOLENT ABERRATION IN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The violent aberrations in the nationalist movement which was avowedly based on the Gandhian principle of non-violence have been in retrospect legitimized as acts of revolutionary patriotism and treated as acts of national importance in a rather ahistorical manner. Such aberrations were committed in the name of Indian National Congress and Mahatma Gandhi by people who were not trained in the doctrine of non-violence under certain local circumstances which were beyond the purview or control of Congress leadership provincial as well as national. The roots of such acts, notwithstanding nationwide repercussions, are generally found in the local situations rather than the policies and programmes at macro level. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the causes results and repercussions of one such violent act i.e. the murder of English Political Agent, named R.L. Bazalgette[1], which was committed by an excited mob in the princely state of Ranpur[2] in Orissa on 5 January, 1939 during the high tide of states people's movement. Bazalgette, the Political Agent of Orissa states had come to Ranpur at the request of its Raja to negotiate between the Raja and his subjects who were carrying on agitation against the latter. But as ill luck would have it Bazalgette himself was killed by the agitators. The murder of a high English official by the people of a backward princely state came as a shock and a surprise and created sensation all over the country. It was followed by the exodus of panic-stricken people, stern repressive measures, police investigation

and judicial trial which resulted in the execution of two young Praja Mandal (States People's Organization) leaders – Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida and rigorous imprisonment to others among whom eleven were sentenced to life terms. The execution of Raghunath Mohanthy and Dibakar Parida[3] to whom thousands of people bade tearful farewell on the fifteen miles long way from Ranpur to Kaluparaghat railway station was the tragic finale of the drama of Bazalgette murder. Ever since the murder of the English Political Agent and the judicial trial and execution of Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakara Parida the following questions have been raised in the public mind – was the murder of Bazalgette pre-meditated or circumstantial, under what circumstances did the murder take place ? to what extent was the local Praja Mandal of Ranpur influenced by the Orissa Congress organization and its leaders ? in what manner was Harekrushna Mahtab, the Orissa Congress leader involved in the popular agitation which resulted in the murder ? Can the murder be condoned or justified on any ground ? should it be glorified as an act of revolutionary violence ? was there undue repression on the people after the murder ? were the police investigation and judicial trial fair ?

After the murder of Bazalgette, in certain circles official as well as unofficial, Congress Party particularly its radical elements like Socialists and Communist were held responsible for exciting the murder. A weekly official report dated 23 January 1939 thus accounts for the murder:

> The incessant propaganda and agitation of recent months directed against neighbouring Indian states which has been allowed to go unchecked in British India in furtherance of an organized movement based on alleged non-violent principles has now had its inevitable result in an outrage in Ranpur state in which the Political Agent, Orissan states was attacked and brutally murdered. Though the news of this outrage has profoundly shocked public

> opinion in Orissa as elsewhere, any indication of real change of policy as directed by provincial Congress Socialist and Communist leaders is not evident in view of the fact that it is still the intention of local agitators and leaders to instigate the tenants of states neighbouring Jajpur sub-division in Cuttack district. Investigations into the circumstances of the Ranpur outrage discloses the moral responsibility of various Congressmen, Socialists and Communists of local importance.[4]

Harekrushna Mahtab who was the Chairman of Orissa States Inquiry Committee constituted by the Orissa States People's Conference in 1937-1938 and was associated with the Orissa States People's movement in that capacity has made the following remarks regarding the allegations of his involvement in the murder in his memoirs :

"The Orissa Government Police who were carrying on, investigation found evidence to prove that I have engineered the murder. My political opponents in Orissa were openly writing in the newspapers that I have engineered the murder. Even the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee passed a resolution holding me responsible for the Ranpur murder. At that time Pandit Nilakantha was the President of provincial Congress committee".[5]

Sir John Austin Hubback, the English Governor of Orissa firmly believed and held that Bazalgette became the victim of Mahtab's conspiracy.[6] Biswanath Das, the then Congress Prime Minister of Orissa strongly protested against this view of the Governor for which the latter got angry with the former and stopped talking with him for some days.[7] In a contemporary daily Oriya newspaper, titled *Deshakatha* the Congress leaders, particularly H.K. Mahtab were indirectly held responsible for the murder in the following words :

> Mahtab's face has turned pale. With his bulky body he is going here and there in a bi-cycle. He had a lot of consultation with the Prime Minister.
>
> The Political Agent was not personally involved in the dispute between the Raja and the subjects. But by persistent vituperation of the Political Departments of Government of India our Congress Party has indirectly roused deep disdain for the high officials like the Political Agent.
>
> For this we hold some Congress leaders specially responsible. They had excited the people by making provocative speeches. How long can the people restrain themselves. The Government of Orissa also has not done its duty in this matter.
>
> We have always told them that you are inexperienced and that you do not know what stuff Garhjat (princely state) is made of. If you play with fire, its heat will affect *Moghul Bandi* (that part of Orissa which was directly ruled by the British). The principle of non-violence does not work in backward areas. The people of these areas can not restrain themselves. Any movement in these places will give rise to rebellion and anarchy.[8]

True, the Ranpur Praja Mandal movement was not an entirely isolated local movement in 1938-1939; it was in a sense a part of all Orissa and even all – India states people's movement. The organization of Ranpur state Praja Mandal in 1938 was a sequel to the second session of all – Orissa states people's conference, held at Cuttack in 1937 under the chairmanship of Pattabhi Sitaramayya and the formation of the States Inquiry Committee for the purpose of inquiry into the alleged misrule and mal-administration in the princely states. Mahtab also holds that the Ranpur Praja Mandal was working according to his advice.[9] Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida, the two young Praja Mandal activists of Ranpur used to come to Cuttack, the state capital and meet Congress leaders.[10] Since Harekrushna Mahtab was the Chairman of States Inquiry Committee and actively involved in states people's movement and reached Ranpur on 5 January 1939, the day of

Bazalgette murder at the request of Banamali Ram, the president of Ranpur Praja Mandal, the police officials of colonial government and Mahtab's political opponents sought to implicate him in the murder. During police investigation into the murder the C.I.D. inspector Manbodh Panda interrogated Mahtab at Cuttack as per section 161 C.I. of the Pendal code.[11] In the police reports Mahtab was particularly held responsible for the exodus of the people of Ranpur after the murder of Bazalgette. But since the murder of Bazalgette took place under certain local circumstances and because of his own impetuousness. it would be preposterous to hold Harekrushna Mahtab, the Orissa Congress leader responsible for the murder. The murder does not seem to have been pre-mediated. Madan Mohan Das, an octogenarian Praja Mandal leader of Ranpur told the writer of this paper that there was no pre-planning behind the murder.

Though formed under the inspiration and guidance of the state-level leaders like Harekrushna Mahtab and Sarangadhar Das, in composition and function the Ranpur Praja Mandal was basically a local affair; it was organized and led by local leaders who were semi-educated, politically inexperienced and not trained in Gandhian line. In the first week of October 1938 the Praja Mandal of Ranpur was formed with the following office bearers- President- Banamali Ram, Vice-President- Krupasindhu Mishra, secretary-Raghunath Mohanty and organising secretary- Dibakar Parida. Towards the end of 1938 the Ranpur Praja Mandal activists held some meetings in the villages outside the state to rouse public opinion against the maladministration of the Raja Krushnachandra Singhdeo Birbar Bajradhar Narendra Mahapatra. Since the Raja was old and invalid, he was guided by his officials among whom the dewan Jagannath Mohanty and daroga Dinabandhu Mohanty had earned a lot of

infamy among the people. Among many demands of the Praja Mandal, an important demand was the dismissal of the dewan Jagannath Mohanty. Some other important demands of the Praja Mandal were civic rights for holding meetings, organizing processions, expressing views and reading newspapers, abolition of *bethi* (compulsory labour without wage), *rasad* (forced supply of food stuff to officers and palace) and *magan* (forced contribution towards the expenses of ceremonies in the palace) and interference in social matters, abolition of restrictions on the use of palanquins, horses, music in marriage ceremonies and use of double shutters, and ornaments.[12] The demands of the Praja Mandal were communicated to the Raja in the form of a representation, copy of which was sent to the Political Agent. As chairman of the States Inquiry Committee Harekrushna Mahtab was aware of the activities of Ranpur Praja Mandal at different stages as is indicated by the report he sent to the Secretary of All India Congress Committee after the murder of Bazalgette. On 4 November 1938 the Praja Mandal placed its demands before the Raja for the first time.[13] On 20 and 25 November the Raja held two meetings of his subjects to discuss the demands.[14] In the meantime the Raja dispensed with the services of the unpopular dewan Jagannath Mohanty.[15] On 26 November the Raja issued a declaration, conceding some of the demands of the Praja Mandal. On 28 November the Praja Mandal submitted a second representation, expressing dissatisfaction with the royal declaration.[16] On 3 December the Raja issued another declaration, granting some more concessions against which the Praja Mandal expressed dissatisfaction by giving another representation on 17 December 1938. On 27 December the Raja issued another declaration, granting some more concessions.[17] On the whole the concessions of the Raja failed to satisfy the Praja Mandal agitators.

At this stage, a militant section of the Praja Mandal which disapproved the constitutional methods broke away from the organization and held a separate meeting on 29 December 1938. In this meeting threatening speeches were delivered by the militant activists.[18]

The Raja now became determined not to grant further concessions and suppress the Praja Mandal agitation. On 31 December R.G. Daubney, the Assistant Political Agent visited Ranpur and met the people in a meeting. In this meeting the assistant dewan asked the agitators to dissolve the Praja Mandal.[19] On 2 January 1939 the Raja declared the Praja Mandal illegal.[20] Simultaneously he arrested Krupasindhu Mishra, the vice-president of Praja Mandal and twelve members of the organization.[21] The ban on Praja Mandal and arrest of some Praja Mandal activists created a tense atmosphere in the Rajpur state. Consequently the other Praja Mandal activists planned a demonstration before the palace for securing the release of the arrested.

In the mean time some encounters between the state authorities and Praja Mandal took place. According to the report of the C.I.D. Inspector Manbodh Panda, in the villages, such as Ramachandrapur, Gopalpur and Telipatna, the Praja Mandal activists threatened rich and influential persons (who were supporters of the Raja) with acts of incendiarism and raised funds under threat of social boycott and other mischief and the houses of the *nazir* and *peskar* of the state were set on fire more than once. To suppress such activities the Raja of Ranpur requisitioned the services of policemen from the neighbouring state of Baud. On 3 January 1939, 18 policemen of Baud state arrived at Ranpur. On 4 January the Ranpur police searched the houses of some supporters of Praja Mandal and scattered their household materials. When these people

protested, the police assaulted them. The police also demolished Praja Mandal office in Chandpur and arrested some Praja Mandal activists.[22]

Under such circumstances, on 4 January 1939, the Raja of Ranpur sent a messenger to the Political Agent Major R.L. Bazalgette who was then staying at Nayagarh dak bunglow, seeking the latter's help.[23] The same day, Banamali Ram, the president of Ranpur Praja Mandal met Harekrushna Mahtab at Cuttack and requested the latter to intervene in Ranpur affairs.[24]

On 5 January 1939, a large crowd, numbering between five and seven thousands gathered before the palace and demanded the release of the arrested persons. While putting pressure on the ruler for the release of the arrested the Praja Mandal had made arrangements for preventing external help to the Raja by obstructing the road on north-west (from Nayagarh) and north-east (from Khurda) with the help of felled trees. On 5 January 1939, leaving his wife in Nayagarh dak bunglow, Bazalgette proceeded from Nayagarh (ten miles away from Ranpur) to intervene in the turmoil that had already started in Ranpur. On the way in the Lodhachua village of Ranpur state he found the road, blocked by the felled trees. Bazalgette and his bodyguards forced the villagers to clear the road by removing the tress. Two villagers – Bhobani Prusti and Kashi Rout were severely beaten and injured for their obstruction to the clearing of the road.[25] According to H.K. Mahtab, after arrival at Ranpur, Bazalgette first held discussion with the Raja and assistant dewan and then met the crowd which was raising slogans at a distance outside the palace.[26] According to another version, after arrival at Ranpur, Bazalgette immediately intervened in the discussion between the agitators and assistant dewan.[27]

Outside the palace, along with the crowd, while the assistant dewan was discussing with Bazalgette about the demands of Praja Mandal, a bullock cart, pulled by men and surrounded by a crowd was found proceeding towards the palace. On inquiry, Bazalgette came to know that the bullock cart was carrying two persons who had been injured during the clearing of road at Lodhachua to Tangi hospital, situated outside the Ranpur state. He rushed to the bullock cart to ascertain the actual condition of the injured. By force he reached the cart, examined the pulse of the injured and came to know that the two injured persons were alive and out of danger. While proceeding towards the cart Bazalgette got cut off from the state police, (only one policeman, named Noor Muhmmad, who was a subedar of Nayagarh always remained with him, while other policemen i.e. the policemen of Ranpur did not follow him) and found himself surrounded by the hostile mob which had become excited over the cry or rumour, "The Political Agent has killed our men; let us kill him." In order to get rid of the hostile crowd Bazalgette fired two rounds with his revolver which killed a person, named Arjun Rout who was physically obstructing him. Now the crowd fell upon Bazalgette with their *lathis*. To save himself Bazalgette started running and tired to enter the house of a man, named Bimba Padhiary, situated in a cluster of houses, called Bhandari Sahi, but he could not do so as the doors were immediately closed from inside by a lady. He then tired to shield himself with the help of a bullock cart wheel lying in front of Padhiary's house. But the agitators would not leave him unhurt; they lathi-charged him to death.[28] In fact as pointed out by E.A.O. Perkins, the Inspector General of Police, Orissa, Bazalgette "took a very considerable risk in going to the spot where he was killed and in placing any reliance on the local state police".[29] Only Noor Muhmmad, the subedar from Nayagarh tried to save the Political Agent's life and was fatally injured by the

mob, and none of the Ranpur policemen eight of whom were present near the palace came to his rescue. Absence of security arrangement for the Political Agent facilitated the mob attack on him. "It is not known", writes H.K. Mahtab, "how the Political Agent, a supervising authority as he is came into the crowd and why the armed police were not sent if some violence was apprehended from the mob."[30]

Bazalgette was killed by the Ranpur mob in the afternoon of 5 January 1939. At that time Mahtab was proceeding from Cuttack towards Ranpur in a motor car along with Banamali Ram, the President of Ranpur Praja Mandal and two other local Praja Mandal workers. The purpose of his going to Ranpur was to pacify and disperse the crowd and find out a solution by discussion with the Political Agent either at Ranpur or at Nayagarh.[31] Although he left Cuttack at 12 noon, he arrived at Ranpur (which was 100 miles away from Cuttack) at about 10 P.M. because of disorder in the motor car which was carrying him and clearing of the road by removal of logs at the village Chandpur (Trees had also been felled on the road by the agitators to prevent outside help to the Raja from the north east[32]). At Chandpur palace of the Raja which was seven miles away from Ranpur Mahtab came to know about the murder of the Political Agent by the mob through telephonic contact with the Raja. After arrival at Ranpur Mahtab found policemen moving hither and thither and firing. He also saw the dead bodies of Bazalgette and Arjun Rout and saw Noor Muhmmad, the Nayagarh subedar lying unconscious whom he sent to the hospital by his car. He had a discussion with the assistant dewan. As he was discussing with the assistant dewan, he saw a noisy crowd was advancing and shouting "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi).[33] (the same slogan had been raised by those who were lathi charging Bazalgette.[34] The agitators were doing violent acts while raising

slogans in the name of the exponent of non-violence). The crowd included the arrested persons who had been forcibly released.

While leaving Ranpur Mahtab advised the people of the state to leave their home and hearth as early as possible otherwise they would be the victims of police reprisal. After returning to Cuttack, on 6 January, at 7.30 A.M. Mahtab conveyed the tragic news to Biswanath Das, the Prime Minister of Orissa. According to Das, it was Mahtab who first informed the former about the murder of Political Agent.[35] After the murder the Raja of Ranpur became completely dum-founded and failed to do his official duty of reporting the matter to his higher authorities and the Government of Orissa. Mahtab issued a statement to the press, asking those who were responsible for the murder of Major Bazalgette to come forward with a confession of their guilt and face the consequence whatever it might be in the interest of the Ranpur people and the non-violent movement in the princely states. He held that those who were responsible for the murder deserved the most severe condemnation of all sections of public, that this foolish act under whatever provocative circumstances it might have been committed had put the Congress Party in a false position and that its repercussions in other states inspite of different circumstances were likely to be serious.[36] But soon Mahtab found himself accused of being a party to the so-called conspiracy that culminated in the murder. It is said that with the help of Mahatma Gandhi and through the intervention of Miss Agatha Harrison, the Labour member of British Parliament he could escape trial as an accused in the murder case. Harrison convinced the Governor of Orissa about Mahtab's innocence. The Military Intelligence Department came to know after investigation that charge against Mahtab was false and that his arrival in Ranpur

on the day of murder was accidential, and not causally linked with the incident.[37]

Besides Mahtab, other leaders of Orissa like Sarangadhar Das (the Secretary, Orissa States People's Conference) and Biswanath Das (the Congress Prime Minister) issued statements to the press, condemning the murder. In his statement to the press, on 6 January, Sarangadhar Das condemned the murder and advised the people of princely states not to launch any mass movement for 'direct action' "in the present circumstances", "as the situation has strengthened the hands of the rulers".[38] Biswanath Das, the Congress Prime Minister issued the following statement to the Press :

"Persons responsible for this ghastly act deserve our severe condemnation. Acts of violence such as these face not only public indignation but also give set-back to any movement calculated to bring responsible government for states subjects and reform of their administration.[39]

In certain places of Orissa, such as Puri town, some villages of Khurda sub-division of Puri district and Nayagarh princely state some meetings were held to condemn the murder. In Puri town, the Mahant of Emar *math* organized a meeting at the Lion's gate of the Jagannath Temple on 19 January for deploring the outrage. In this meeting some speakers attributed the murder to "socialist propaganda".[40]

On 14 January, in a public meeting, held at Clarke Hall under the chairmanship of Rai Bahadur Lokanath Mishra, the Chairman of Puri municipality, a resolution was adopted, expressing, "deep sense of sorrow", condemning the murder and asking for a thorough inquiry for bringing the miscreants to justice.[41] In a public meeting, held at Barapari village of Khurda Khasmahal under the

chairmanship of a *sarbarakar* (village-headman), named Benudhar Patnaik on 18 January 1939, a resolution was passed, condemning the murder and holding Congress workers from outside responsible for it.[42]

The murder of Bazalgette was condemned by top Congress leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose (Congress President) and Jawaharlal Nehru (the President off All India States Peoples Conference). Gandhi issued the following statement to the press on 7 January, 1939;

"The murder of Major Bazalgette, Political Agent, Orissa is most unfortunate and comes as a rude shock. I tender my sympathy to the family of the deceased. I hope the subedar who accompanied the deceased will recover from the wounds. The Praja Mandal is expected to carry on strictest investigation and find out the cause of the murder. It should be a warning to all the workers to be most careful in conducting mass agitations. They should realize that the slightest departure from non-violence is bound to harm the movement for freedom whether in the states or all over India".[43]

Subhas Chandra Bose regarded the Ranpur incident as a deviation from the Congress principle and held that "Congress can extend its moral sympathy and support to the movement of states people only if that movement is conducted in accordance with the principle and policy of the Congress." Regarding the possible use of violence under provocation Bose observed:

"Newspaper reports give one impression that the mob in Ranpur was subjected to provocation in as much as they had been fired on. But no provocation however great can be an excuse for departure from non-violence which should be the basic principle of

the Indian mass movement. As long as the states people's movement is conducted in a non-violent manner it is bound to grow from strength to strength till one day it will become altogether irresistible but such incident as has occurred at Ranpur will surely cause a setback to the movement and will moreover put the people in the wrong".[44]

Jawaharlal Nehru made the following observation about the Ranpur incident in his presidential address to the All India States People's Conference, held at Ludhiana on 15 and 16 February 1939.

"In Orissa the regrettable murder of the British Agent, Major Bazalgette has led as such acts, even when committed in a moment of folly always lead to unforeseen consequences. The people of the Orissa States are backward and have to suffer for their lack of understanding of our basic principles. This act is a warning to us to conduct our movement in such a manner that the people realise its significance and adhere strictly to the policy of non-violence. For them to forget this is to injure their own cause.[45]

The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting, held at Bordoloi from 11 to 14 January 1939 where H.K. Mahtab himself related what he had seen and heard at Ranpur four hours after the occurrence of the tragedy passed a resolution regretting the murder and warning the people of the states "that such acts of violence do great injury to the cause of freedom in the states."[46]

In spite of wide condemnation of the murder of the English Political Agent there were some attempts to condone and justify it. In the public meeting, organized by the Mahant of Emar Math at Lion's gate. Puri on 19 January 1939 to condemn the murder, one Panka Mishra, reported to be a Congressman observed that "Major Bazalgette was to blame for his own murder in that he killed two

Oriyas" (Actually he had killed one person by firing.) He objected to the criticism of socialists and even though a Congressman he supported use of violence saying, "Violence was found to exist in every age and every country".[47] The same day, in the same place, after the dispersal of the above meeting, another meeting was held, which passed a resolution condemning Major Bazalgette for killing two persons and regretting their death.[48]

According to a police report, a noted Communist of Bombay wrote to Ananta Pattanayak, a Communist of Orissa, justifying the murder and criticizing the suspension of the states people's movement after the incident. He pointed out that Bazalgette who had converted the Orissa states into slaughter houses infuriated the mob by killing two persons and provoked them to retaliate. The Bombay Communist leader observed that suspension of states people's movement would undo what the movement had already achieved, demoralize the states people and encourage the rulers to intensify repression and wreak their vengeance on the Praja Mandal leaders.[49]

A "well-known public worker of Orissa"[50] (anonymous) wrote to Mahatma Gandhi, questioning the efficacy of non-violent principle against the "inhuman" and "brutal" methods, adopted by the rulers with the support of the Political Department. He pointed out that Bazalgette provoked the mob to violence by firing on them and described murder as the climax of the brutal repression carried on by the Eastern States Agency "If the ruling chiefs of Orissa had been properly advised and led by the Political Agent and if he had not been party to terrible repression," he observed, "the people would not have gone out of control". He suggested to Mahatma Gandhi, "the greatest apostle of truth and non-violence" to give a warning to the Political Department of Government of India and

Eastern States Agency against the adoption of brutal methods in dealing states subjects. Sympathetic towards the masses and critical of the ruler's policy of repression though Gandhi was, he reacted to the above letter by describing the Bazalgette murder as "an act of gross indiscipline and breach of the fundamental Congress policy."[51]

The murder of a high English official in colonial period was likely to have a nationwide reaction. By 1938-39 the Congress party had espoused the cause of the states people for which Congress leaders like Gandhi, Bose and Nehru had to express their views on the Ranpur incident. The local Congress leaders of Orissa like Mahtab were more concerned about it because of their closer association with movements of Orissa States. Ultimately law took it own course. The murder was followed by despatch of forces, police investigation and repression and judicial trial for which the people of Ranpur had to suffer a lot.

The corpse of Major Bazalgette lay on the verandah of the cottage where he had been killed till the evening of 6 January 1939, being guarded by two policemen. On 7 January, in the morning, it was brought to Cuttack. Mrs. Bazalgette accompanied her husband's corpse from Ranpur. The same day, in a cemetery of Cuttack, at 11.30 AM the funeral took place. It was attended by Mrs. Bazalgette and a gathering of prominent officials of Orissa Government. Before the funeral the body was subjected to inquest and post mortem. The inquest revealed extensive injuries over the head.[52]

After the murder of Bazalgette, fearing police reprisal, a large number of people left Ranpur for the Khasmahal territory (territory, directly ruled by the British) in Khurda. On the fateful night of 5 January Mahtab also had advised the people to leave their homes.

The exodus was reported in an English newspaper in the following words.:

"Enquiries go to show that the majority of the people of Ranpur state whose population is 47000 have left the state. Only the old, the disabled and crippled have been left out. A few loyalists have taken shelter in the palace. Refugees from Ranpur state are living in villages from Banpur to Bulgarh, while some are proceeding further into interior towards Banki.[53]

On the evening of 6 January Inspector General of Orissa Police and Daubney (the assistant Political Agent) arrived at Ranpur with fifty armed policemen from Cuttack. Next day in the morning (11.30 A.M.) Lt. Colonel H.W.C. Robson, (the Resident) and A.N. Barlow (the Secretary to the Resident) arrived at Ranpur with a detachment (120 soldiers) of 1/15th Punjab Regiment.[54]

The police investigation into the murder case was entrusted to the police officers of the Orissa Government as the Ranpur state police was considered incompetent to do so. The investigation was conducted by the C.I.D. Inspector Manbodh Panda and sub-inspector Gangadhar Dwivedi. Initially investigation was hampered by exodus. For the return of refugees there was a discussion between the Resident and Mahtab. The Resident assured the latter that there would be no mass reprisal, that only the accused would be tried through judicial procedure and that the trial would be carried upto High Court. Mahtab took up responsibility for the return of refugees.[55] The assistant dewan of Ranpur issued tickets, permitting the loyalist refugees who had taken shelter in Khurda Khasmahal to return home.[56] A number of arrests were made outside as well as within the Ranpur state. The inspector of police, Khurda was empowered to arrest 19 fugitives against whom there was evidence

to show that they were either accused or abetters in the case, started at Ranpur under section 302/147 IPC for the Bazalgette murder.[57] Against the policemen who came to maintain law and order, and who carried on investigation there were charges of looting, torture and rude behavior. The Inspector General of Police, Orissa suspended some members of Reserve Police Force who had been dispatched immediately after the murder as they were found to be in possession of looted property.[58] The policemen forced some people to give evidence false or true. The assistant dewan. Chandeshwar Mishra, the brother in law of the Praja Mandal activist Madan Mohan Das gave evidence against the latter for which the latter's wife, (the sister of Mishra) later on committed suicide.[59]

After the framing of charge sheet, the judicial trial was carried on by magistrates from Orissa and a sessions judge from Bihar in camps at Ranpur. For the purpose of hearing appeal in High Court Hon'ble Justice Agarwala of Patna High Court was appointed. To defend the accused, the Socialists of Khurda such as Prananath Pattnayak, MLA formed a defence committee under the chairmanship of a lawyer named Lokanath Mishra. Dinabandhu Sahu, Gadadhar Jena and Shatrughna Mohanty acted as defence lawyers. Rai Bahadur Chintamani Acharya acted as the public prosecutor. In the court of sessions judge sixteen persons were convicted. Out of them three – Raghunath Mohanty, Dibakar Parida and Chinta Nayak were given death sentence, eleven were given life imprisonment and others were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for periods varying between six months and two years. In the High Court death sentence on Chinta Nayak was commuted to two years rigorous imprisonment, while four others – Chakra Rout, Raghu Prusti, Bhubani Prusti and Kashi Rout who had been sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment were acquitted.[60]

After the conviction of Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida H.K. Mahtab made an appeal (dated 21 February 1940) to the Raja of Ranpur to grant pardon to them.[61] The appeal fell on deaf years. They were executed in Hazaribag jail on 4 April 1941.

The execution of Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida, the two young Praja Mandal leaders roused much public feelings. It is held by many that these two persons were not present on the spot where the mob fell upon Bazalgette and that the real culprits could not be found out. In retrospect, Mohanty and Parida, the two convicts of the colonial government have become martyrs and the murder of Bazalgette a revolutionary act. In fact the murder of Bazalgette was a retaliatory act, committed by a volatile mob which had assembled before the Ranpur palace to get some arrested persons released, and had been infuriated by the rumour that he had killed two persons on the way from Nayagarh and the fact that he killed one at Ranpur by firing during encounter with the mob. The conviction of Mohanty and Parida, if they were not present on the spot where the assault on the Political Agent took place, was a miscarriage of justice. Or they became scapegoats for satisfying the colonial ruler's wrath for the murder of a person of their race. Posterity is therefore justified in treating them as martyrs.

Notes and References

1. Major R.L. Bazalgette (1990-1939) was an Englishman who received his commission in the Indian Army in 1919. In 1926 his services were transferred to Political Department of Government of India. He was appointed as Political Agent for the twenty six Oriya-speaking princely states within Eastern States Agency in May 1937. He was posted at Sambalpur.

2. Ranpur, with an area of 204 square miles and a population of 47713 according to 1931 census, was one of the Oriya-speaking princely states which were merged in the province of Orissa after independence. During the major part of the British rule the princely states of Orissa remained under the control and supervision of the Commissioner of Orissa Division. In 1906 the princely states of Orissa and some Oriya-speaking princely states of Central provinces were placed under an officer called Political Agent, who was subject to the control of the Commissioner of Orissa division. His office was located at Sambalpur. In 1922 these princely states were placed under the independent control of an officer, called Political Agent and Commissioner of Orissa feudatory states. In 1933 Eastern States Agency, comprising 26 Orissa states and 14 states of Central Provinces was created. This Agency was administered by an official called Resident who remained under the control of the Political Department of Government of India. His office was located at Calcutta. Under the Resident there were two Political Agents, one for 26 Orissa States and another for 14 Central Provinces states.

3. Raghunath Mohanty (1910-1941) and Dibakar Parida (1911-1941) were the two young Praja Mandal leaders of Ranpur. Though not well-educated (they were under-matriculates), they had literary tastes and wrote some books. They were not only organizing Praja Mandal movement in Ranpur but also were in touch with the state level Congress leaders of Orissa, for which they were sometimes coming to Cuttack the state capital.

4. Quoted in Ghanashyam Das (ed), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa,* Vol. IV (1930-47), 1957, pp. 22-23.

5. Harekrushna Mahtab, *Sadhanar Pathe* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1972, p. 199.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Nilamani Routroy, *Smruti O Anubhuti* (Oriya), Cuttack (2nd edition), 2001 pp. 111-112. Biswanath Das is reported to have told Nilamani Routroy who subsequently became Chief Minister of Orissa about Hubback's firm belief regarding H.K. Mahtab's involvement in the Bazalgette murder.
8. *Deshakatha* (Oriya daily), 6 January 1939.
9. Mahtab, *ibid,* p.194.
10. Routroy, *op. cit.*, p.112.
11. Satyabadi Baliarsingh, *Ranpur Bidroha* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1985, p.128.
12. Harekrushna Mahtab's letter to Secretary, All India Congress Committee (no date), AICC file IV and VI. 1938 (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library hereafter NMML).
13. Ibid
14. Ibid
15. Ibid
16. Ibid
17. Ibid
18. Ibid
19. Ibid
20. Ibid
21. Baliar Singh, *op. cit.*, p.109

22. See *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 10 January, 1939 and Report no.111, dated 24 January, 1939, submitted by Manbodh Panda, C.I.D. Inspector to Superintendent of Police C.I.D. Orissa. Special Branch, Confidential File No.6/39. Government of Orissa, special section (Orissa State Archives hereafter OSA).
23. Baliar Singh, *Op. cit.*p.114
24. H.K. Mahtab's letter to Secretary A.I.C.C., mentioned above (NMML)
25. Baliarsingh, *op. cit.* pp.115-116.
26. H.K. Mahtab's letter to Secretary A.I.C.C. mentioned above (NMML)
27. Baliarsingh, *op. cit.,* p.116
28. *Ibid,* pp. 112-120
29. Letter from EAO Perkins, Inspector General of Police, Orissa to Chief Secretary Government of Orissa dated 7 January 1939, confidential file No.6/39 Government of Orissa, special Section (OSA).
30. H.K. Mahtab's letter to Secretary, AICC mentioned above
31. Mahtab, op. cit., p.195.
32. Ibid p.196.
33. Ibid p.197
34. The letter E.A.O. Perkins, Inspector General of Orissa, mentioned above
35. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 11 January, 1939
36. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 8 January, 1939

37. Mahtab, op. cit., p.199
38. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 8 January 1939
39. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 7 January 1939
40. Letter from EAO Perkins, Inspector General of Police, Orissa to Chief Secretary Government of Orissa, dated 21 January 1939, confidential file No.6/39, Government of Orissa, Special Section (OSA).
41. Confidential File No.6/39, Government of Orissa, Special Section (OSA).
42. Ibid
43. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 9 January, 1939
44. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 10 January, 1939
45. *Indian Annual Register,* 1939, Vol. I., p.442
46. *Ibid,* p.309
47. Letter from EAO Perkins, I G Police, Orissa to Chief Secretary Government of Orissa, dated 21 January 1939, mentioned above (OSA)
48. Ibid
49. Report from Superintendent of Police, C.I.D. to Chief Secretary Government of Orissa, dated 13 January 1939, confidential file No.6/39, Government of Orissa, Special Section (OSA).
50. Satyabadi Baliarsingh, *Ranpur Itihas* (Oriya) Rajranpur, 1990, pp102-3, Baliarsingh learnt from H.K. Mahtab that this "well-known public worker' is Nabakrushna Chaudhury who was a Congress Socialist in thirties and after independence became the Chief Minister of Orissa and a Sarvoday leader.

51. *Harijan,* 21 January, 1939
52. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 8 January, 1939.
53. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 11 January, 1939.
54. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 8 January, 1939.
55. Mahtab, *op. cit.,* p.199
56. D.O. Letter No.36-C, dated 30 January, 1939 from the District Magistrate, Puri, to Chief Secretary Government of Orissa, confidential file No.6/39 (OSA).
57. Ibid
58. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 10 January, 1939.
59. Baliar Singh, *Ranpur Bidroha,* p.135
60. *Amrit Bazar Patrika,* 23 November, 1939.
61. This letter has been kept in Orissa Achieves, Bhubaneswar.

XII

THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT IN ORISSA : THE PARTICIPATION AND AWAKENING OF WOMEN

While assessing the contribution of the Civil Disobedience Movement to the awakening of women in Orissa Dr. H.K. Mahtab has made the following observation in his booklet, *Dashavarashara Odisa* (first published in 1935): "The awakening of women in Orissa has been possible because of this *satyagraha.* As a result of the movement of 1921, the only woman who could assert herself in the face of much difficulties was Mrs. Sarala Devi.* The degree of awakening among women, that has occurred in Orissa, is not to be found even in Bihar. Woman workers are now the leading workers of Orissa. This awakening which is the outcome of a *satyagraha* would not have been possible in normal course even by a hundred years' efforts."[1] This apparently exaggerated statement is however based on the fact that there was a remarkable awakening among the women of Orissa, urban as well as rural, during the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930's. Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the ground work which had already been done earlier for the participation of women in the nationalist movement. As a result of the Non-cooperation movement and implementation of Gandhian constructive programme, women had been involved in the social and political movements all over India; the women belonging to the families of the Congress activists became particularly acquainted with the Congress Party's programme.[2] In Orissa, as elsewhere in India, a number of woman Congress workers and volunteers emerged out of such families in course of time. But as a

result of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930's hundreds of illiterate rural women became involved in the nationalist movement.

In his first visit to Orissa in March 1921 Mahatma Gandhi addressed a meeting of about forty women at Vinod Vihari, Cuttack.[3] Prominent among the women who attended this meeting were Sarojini Chaudhury, Hiranmayi Senapati, Sarala Devi, Rama Devi,* and Haimavati Devi. In that meeting some women donated their ornaments to Gandhi.[4] Though some women, most notably Sarala Devi, the wife of Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the first Secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee were associated with the Non-cooperation Movement, yet no woman of Orissa was jailed during the Non-cooperation Movement. In 1922, Rama Devi and Hiramani Devi (the mother of Niranjan Pattanayak, the leading Congressman of the Ganjam district) attended the Gaya session of Indian National Congress.[5] In 1924 a women's association was formed in the Berhampur town. This association used to hold its weekly meetings in various families of the town. Even untouchable women were allowed to attend its meetings, held in the Swarajya Ashram (Congress Office in the Berhampur town).[6] The first Orissa Provincial Conference, held at Cuttack towards the end of June 1924, was attended by some ladies like Rama Devi, Sarojini Chaudhury and Haimavati Devi, who were seated in a corner.[7] On 30 June 1924 the first all Orissa Women's Conference was held at Swarajya Ashram, Cuttack mainly through Sarala Devi's efforts. It was attended by two hundred women. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, the famous Bengali Scientist who had presided over the Provincial Conference also presided over this meeting. It was attended by Madhusudan Das, the Grand Old man of Orissa and Gopabandhu Das, the pioneer of Gandhian Congress. Gopabandhu Das addressed this meeting.[8] Addressing this meeting in a written speech Rasamani

Devi, the woman worker of Ganjam stressed the need for a permanent women's association as a branch of the All India Women's Conference. Haimavati Devi, the woman worker of Cuttack pointed out the demerits of modern education for women and emphasized the necessity of national education.[9] Sarala Devi urged the women of Orissa to take part in the nationalist movement like their counterparts in Bengal. She also stressed the need for the abolition of untouchability from the land of Jagannath.[10] In 1925, the second session of Orissa Provincial Conference held at Bolagarh village in the Puri district was attended by Mrs. Sunamani Hota.* She organized a women's conference on this occasion.[11]

While the nationalist movement was in progress, some leading Congressmen like Gopabandhu Das (the first President of Utkal Provincial Congress Committee), Jayamangal Rath (the leading Congress worker of the Ganjam district) and Krupasindhu Hota (the leading Congress worker of the Puri district) sought to elevate the status of women through their personal efforts.[12] Gopabandhu Das was particularly concerned about the miserable life of the Hindu widows. He persuaded young people to marry widows, but his persuasive efforts in this direction did not bear any fruit, because of social stigma, attached to the widow marriage. To make the widows self-reliant by learning some crafts as well as to train them as workers in the cause of the nationalist movement, Gopabandhu established an institution at Puri, called Jagannath Vidhava Ashrama in 1926.[13] Some alumni of this Ashram such as Mrs. Sunamani Hota and Mrs. Annapurna Sahu joined the nationalist movement.

In 1928 Miss Sailbala Das organized a women's conference in the Ravenshaw Girls' School with a view to establishing a branch of All India Women's Coherence in Orissa.[14] The Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, held in December, 1928, was

attended by the following ladies – Rama Devi, Sarojini Chaudhury, Sarala Devi, Janhavi Devi, Kokila Devi* and Rasamani Devi.[15]

Prior to the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930, some ladies, belonging to the Congress workers' families, mostly the wives of Congress workers, had been transforming their life styles for participating in the nationalist movement. Rama Devi has pointed out in her autobiography that since 1921 she used to pay occasional visits to the Congress Ashram (Alaka) at Jagatsinghpur and that three years before the movement of 1930 she and her husband had made up their minds for full involvement in the nationalist movement.[16]

By 1930 woman workers were staying at the Congress Ashrma in Kadua (Sakhigopal, Puri) and Alaka Ashram (Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack). Mrs. Sunamani Hota and Mrs. Annapurna Sahu, who were the inmates of Kadua Ashram had stayed for sometime in Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram before the movement of 1930. In 1930 the Alaka Ashram of Jagatsinghpur had the following woman inmates – Rama Devi, Prafulla Kumari Devi (the wife of the Balasore Congress worker, Bishwanath Hota), Laxmi Devi (the wife of the Puri Congress worker Satyabadi Nanda), Shobha Devi (the wife of the Ganjam Congress worker, Antaryami Panda) and Guna Manjari Devi (the wife of the Puri Congress worker, Lal Bihari Das). At that time Rama Devi was busy in enrolling the village women as the four anna members of the Congress.[17] In 1930 Purabai, a woman social worker of Gandhi's Satyagraha Ashram came to Orissa. Purabai and Nathibai (the wife of the Gujarati social worker Jivram Kalyanji Kothari) were working for the promotion of *khadar* and abandonment of *purdah* among the women in the Balasore district. They were given shelter in Bhadrak by a lady, named Nishamani Devi, in spite of official intimidations.[18]

As a result of Nabakrushna Chaudhury's marriage with Malati Devi,* a Bengali girl, who was studying in the Visvabharati University, the Chaudhury family provided a second woman worker, dedicated to the cause of Congress movement in Orissa. H.K. Mahtab has highlighted the significance of this marriage in the following words :- "The appearance of Srimati Malati Devi in the Chaudhury family as Nabakrushna Chaudhury's wife, which was a radical social event, turned out to be an important factor, responsible for the awakening of women in Orissa. Srimati Malati Devi is a well-born and well-educated lady. Srijukta Gopabandhu Chaudhury, his younger brother Sri Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Rama Devi, Malati Devi and Pandit Pranakrushna Padhiary were the first persons in Cuttack to dream of a *satyagraha* ".[19] The marriage of Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Devi took place in 1927. Soon after their marriage they took up a programme of agricultural farming and rural reconstruction in the village Anakhia, five miles away from Jagatsinghpur.[20]

Ramadevi has pointed out in her memoirs that initially, when Salt *satyagraha* was being planned by the Congress leaders of Orissa, it was decided that woman workers would concentrate on the *Khadar* programme during the movement. At the beginning, Rama Devi, Malati Devi and other ladies played their parts in the movement by giving a hearty send-off to the *Satyagrahis* in the Kathjudi river-bed in the traditional manner with earthen lamps, flowers and sandal paste. In the meeting, held in the Kathjudi river bed on 13 April 1930 to bid farewell to the fourth batch of *Satyagrahis,* which was attended by such woman workers as Sarojini Chaudhury (the widow of late Gagan Bihari Chaudhury), Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Prafulla Kumari Devi and Laxmi Devi, Sarojini Chaudhury appealed to the men and women in the audience

to prove themselves worthy citizens by joining the Civil Disobedience Movement.[21] In this meeting in response to Malati Devi's appeal two hundred pieces of foreign clothes were surrendered by the people for the sake of bonafire.[22]

Soon Rama Devi, Malati Devi and Kiranbala Sen* decided to organize a women's campaign for participation in the Salt *Satyagraha* at Inchudi. They came to Balasore for this purpose. In the evening of 18 April 1930 Rama Devi and Malati Devi addressed a meeting of one hundred women at Balasore. Rama Devi enlightened the women about what they should do during the Civil Disobedience Movement; she emphasized the importance of boycott of foreign goods and promotion of spinning. Malati Devi advised them to work out the programme of prohibition, while the male civil resisters were engaged in the manufacture of contraband salt.[23] The next day they mobilized the women of Shrijang, a neighbouring village of Inchudi for taking part in the Salt *Satyagraha*. On 20 April 1930, led by Rama Devi and Malati Devi, fifteen hundred rural women collected salt earth at Inchudi.[24] According to the previous direction from the authorities the police did not interfere with these women *Satyagrahis.*[25]

On the previous day, i.e. 19 April 1930, in a meeting held in the Kathjudi river bed to felicitate Gopabandhu Chaudhury and Purna Chandra Bose (both of whom had been just released after serving short term jail sentences), Shrimati Romola Devi,* the chair person of this meeting read out a welcome address on behalf of the women and felicitated the two noted civil resisters with flowers and sandal paste. In his reply to this welcome Gopabandhu Chaudhury emphasized the emancipation and awakening of women as an indispensable item of the Civil Disobedience programme. He said: "The awakening of women is an index of freedom. We have

committed injustice and sin by always keeping the women in an acute state of bondage, for which we have to expiate in this Satyagraha".[26] On 22 April 1930 an important meeting of women was held in Gopabandhu Chaudhury's residence at Cuttack for initiating organized participation of women workers in the nationalist movement.[27]

On 28 April 1930, in a meeting, held in the Kathjudi river bed soon after the arrest of prominent Congress leaders such as Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Harekrushna Mahtab and Pranakrushna Padhiary, in response to Malati Chaudhury's appeal people parted with 1500 pieces of foreign clothes for bonfire. These clothes were lit by a Marwari.[28] On 7 May 1930, protesting against Mahatma Gandhi's arrest Malati Chaudhury brought out a large procession in the Cuttack town.[29]

By the middle of May 1930, Rama Devi, Malati Chaudhury and Prafulla Kumari were busy in mobilizing men as well as women for the Salt Satyagraha in Kujang. Rama Devi contacted the Rani of Kujang, Bhababati Pata Mahadei, who readily came forward to lead the local women in the salt campaign. At the Rani's call hundreds of housewives came out with baskets and took part in the salt campaign at Kaliapat.[30]

In the mean time Sarala Devi was busy in organizing Salt *Satyagraha* in the Ganjam district. When Salt *Satyagraha* in the Ganjam district was started at Huma early in May 1930, hundreds of women were present on the spot.[31] Picketting was carried on by the lady volunteers under the leadership of Mrs. J.V. Narayana before the liquor shops in the Berhampur town.[32] On 31 May 1930 Sarala Devi was arrested at Berhampur after having boarded the train for Palasa. She was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.[33] Sarala

Devi had the honour of being the first Oriya woman to court imprisonment for participating in the nationalist movement.[34]

After the imprisonment of the male activists in April and May 1930, Rama Devi, Malati Devi and about fifty other woman workers kept up the organizational work as well as the movement of the Congress Party. As pointed out by Nilamani Pradhan, they worked "more strenuously and bore greater hardship than many of the men leaders could have done.[35] They enrolled members for the party and collected about Rs.30,000/-.[36] Rama Devi toured in the villages as well as towns for enrolling members and raising subscriptions. Even though a young lady, about thirty years old at that time, to the sheer surprise of many people she fearlessly toured in the villages of Balikuda, Jajpur and Kendrapada and organized and addressed meetings of women to enlighten them about their role in the Civil Disobedience movement.[37] When Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya was arrested in August 1930, he nominated Rama Devi as the President of the Cuttack District Congress Committee.[38] From 26 September 1930 till her arrest in the first week of November 1930 she acted as the President of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee.[39]

Malati Devi was active in the boycott movement. Towards the middle of June 1930 she was elected as the Secretary of the Cuttack District Congress Committee. At her persuasion the cloth merchants of Cuttack town suspended the sale of foreign cloths.[40] Besides Malati Devi the other women who took part in picketting were Binapani Devi,* Kiranbala Sen, Sunamani Hota, Anjali Devi, Sundarmani Devi, Shobha Devi, Gopala Sundari Devi, Sarala Devi, Prafulla Kumari Hota, Radha Devi, Chandramani Devi and Rama Devi.[41]

Rama Devi was arrested on 7 November 1930. Protesting against her arrest, on 9 November 1930 the Cuttack town observed a complete *hartal*. She was sentenced to three months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs.200/-[42]. She went to jail, expressing gratitude for the love and affection the women of Orissa had given her.[43]

According to Nilamani Pradhan, during the first phase of Civil Disobedience Movement, the following six ladies were imprisoned – Sarala Devi, Chandramani Devi, Sunamani Devi, Malati Devi, Rama Devi and an anonymous old lady of Balasore who was imprisoned for a few days for having manufactured contraband salt. Sunamani Devi was arrested at Puri in July 1930 for delivering a speech in violation of the police law 32 on her return from the Sabarmati Ashram.[44] According to Dr. H.K. Mahtab his wife Subhadra Devi and sister Maina Devi were sentenced to imprisonment for participating in the first phase of Civil Disobedience movement. Subhadra Devi was twice sentenced to one month imprisonment.[45]

After serving six months' jail sentences in Vellore jail Sarala Devi was released in the first week of December 1930. On her arrival at the Cuttack station on 8 December 1930, she was garlanded and taken in a procession to the Satyagraha Ashram. The same day, in the evening, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of the woman activist, Binapani Devi in honour of Sarala Devi. In that meeting Union Jack was burnt.[46] After the conclusion of Gandhi-Irwin pact Rama Devi and Malati Devi were released from Bhagalpur jail. On their way back home, at Balasore in a meeting of 3000 people they were given a hearty reception by the people of Balasore. On behalf of the people of Balasore Janhavi Devi and Devendra Giri gave them address of welcome.[47] On 15

March 1931, in a large meeting of 10,000 people, held in honour of the *Satyagrahis* released from jail, Sarala Devi and Binapani Devi delivered welcome addresses. In that meeting Ramadevi was one of the *Satyagrahi* speakers. In her moving speech she expressed great appreciation and maternal sympathy for those boy volunteers who had been whipped and tortured as 'C' class prisoners. In his speech Gopabandhu Chaudhury appreciated the role of woman workers in the movement.[48]

By 1931 Rama Devi's stature as Provincial Congress leader was quite high. A conference of the Cuttack District Congress workers, held on 20 March 1931 at Jain Mandir Ashram, was presided by her. This meeting was attended by the top Congress leaders like Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Harekrushna Mahtab, Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Rajkrushna Bose and Jadumani Mangaraj.[49] On 22 March, at the same place, a women's meeting was held. In that meeting Rama Devi urged the women to carry on peaceful picketting before the opium, ganja and liquor shops according to Mahatma Gandhi's instruction. The woman workers accordingly carried on picketting.[50] In the Karachi Congress of March 1931, Rama Devi canvassed in the Bihar provincial camp to win their support for holding the next Congress session in Orissa.[51] In the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee meeting, held in the first week of May 1931, she was elected as the treasurer of the U.P.C.C., and was entrusted with the task of organizing a center for training woman workers.[52]

The enthusiastic participation of hundreds of rural women in the Civil Disobedience movement is a remarkable feature of this movement. Rama Devi found a spontaneous response from the women in the villages of Balikuda, Jajpur and Kendrapada. She felt overwhelmed by their affection. If she asked for water they offered

her milk. With little efforts she could organize the women's meeting.[53] Steeped in the household affairs within the four walls of the houses, and having no contact with the newspapers, these women could instinctively imbibe the spirit of Civil Disobedience movement.[54]

The women in the villages discarded their *purdah* and greeted the *Satyagrahis*, as the latter marched through the villages. On 17 April, 1930, in the Sundari village of the Balasore district, the village women provided the nursing care to the *Satyagrahis* who had been severely lathi-charged and almost rendered senseless while carrying contraband salt to the Balasore town.[55] In the villages of Balasore seashore, such as Inchudi, Shrijang, Iram, Saratha, Tarei, Chhanua, Parikhi, Kherang and Rupakhanda and Kujang villages of the Cuttack district hundreds of village women took part in the manufacture of contraband salt. In some places the women manufactured salt in defiance of the police. The police even used abusive language towards the lady *Satyagrahis*. "The sight of rustic men and women defying European Officers", writes Paranakrushna Padhiary, "is worth living for".[56] On 21 May 1930, when 700 women were coming back from Iram with salt earth, the police charged them with lathis. The women remained unpurturbed and bore the lathi charges.[57]

It is quite significant to note that some rural women courageously came forward to participate in the Civil Disobedience movement in the face of opposition from family members and had to suffer from social ostracism and persecution for exhibiting such courage. "The courage of some spinsters", writes Rama Devi, "was a matter of surprise and fountain of hope that a county having such courageous women and girls could not be kept in bondage by any power."[58] Such women had a feeling that women had a rightful role to play in the nationalist movement and identified women's urge for

emancipation and self respect with country's struggle for liberation from foreign rule. According to Mrs. Annapurna Maharana,* out of forty five female civil resisters, imprisoned in Cuttack jail in 1932 (Mrs. Maharana was one of them), sixteen had joined the movement in spite of the opposition from their family members. In the Ahiyas village of Jajpur, at the inspiration of Rama Devi and Sarojini Chaudhury, a housewife volunteered to join the movement. But her husband and other villagers physically prevented her from taking such a courageous step and censured Rama Devi and Sarojini Chaudhury for allegedly misguiding the village women. But another housewife of the same village, named Mohini Devi, boldly came out of the domestic seclusion, met Rama Devi at Cuttack and joined the movement of 1932; she was jailed in 1932. Being inspired by her, her husband joined the Civil Disobedience movement. In the Dhaneswar village of Korei Thana of Jajpur sub-division, two unmarried girls, named Nishamani and Kadambini, joined the Civil Disobedience movement in spite of their parents' opposition at Rama Devi's inspiration. Their parents levelled the charges of kidnapping against Rama Devi.[59]

Rama Devi and Annapurna Maharana have recorded the extra-ordinary courage, shown by a widow, named Sushila, belonging to the Rampur village of Binjharpur thana of the Cuttack district, in joining the nationalist movement.[60] One evening she daringly left her home and crossed the river in search of her destination. She spent the night in a Congress sympathizer's house and came to Cuttack next day to join the Civil Disobedience movement. She was socially ex-communicated even by the members of her parents' family for some time for joining the Congress movement. Rama Devi has recorded the case of another village woman who joined the Congress to avenge the slighting behaviour,

shown by her husband and other male persons of the village towards the village women, for their curiosity to know about the Congress.[61]

A natural corollary of the women's participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was the social ostracization of those women who had taken part in the movement in the face of opposition from the family members and other members of the rural society. The society looked down upon them as perverted women. From her personal experience Annapurna Maharana narrated to me the ill treatment, meted out to two spinsters – Godavari Devi and Adharamani Devi, by their family members for taking part in the Civil Disobedience movement. During his tour in the villages for Harijan uplift H.K. Mahtab found that many woman civil resisters were being subjected to ill treatment in the society. Directed by him, his wife Subhadra Devi* tried to rehabilitate them.[62] It was natural that some women could not restrain themselves as a result of the freedom they obtained by entering upon public life. Lack of restraint on the part of men as well as women created an untoward social situation for some women and acted as a set-back for the uplift of women.[63]

The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 prepared the ground for large scale involvement of women in the organizational work of Congress as well as the resumed Civil Disobedience movement of 1932 and to a lesser extent in the Harijan movement of 1933 and 1934. Fourteen woman delegates from Orissa (Balasore-5, Sambalpur-2, Cuttack-6 and Puri-1) attended the Karachi session of the Congress, held in March, 1931 after the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement.[64] Mahatma Gandhi was pleased to see such an appreciable number of woman delegates, from Orissa in this Congress session.[65] Sarala Devi moved a resolution in the Karachi Congress for the holding of the next session

of A.I.C.C. in Orissa. This resolution, which was seconded by Gopabandhu Chaudhury was passed by the Congress. Thereafter from remote villages like Bari, Kalyanpur, Purushottampur and Ahiyas of the Jajpur sub-division many women came forward to work as volunteers for the annual session of the Congress, scheduled to be held at Puri in 1931. They also went to jail by participating in the resumed Civil Disobedience movement.[66]

The holding of two women's conferences in 1931, one at Puri and another at Balasore, resulted in mobilizing an appreciable number of women for the nationalist movement. The Puri Conference was presided over by Janhavi Devi. The Balasore conference was organized by two sisters – Janhavi Devi and Kokila Devi. Janhavi Devi was the chairman of the reception committee and Dr. Kuntala Kumari Sabat (1901-1938), the nationalist-minded poetess presided over the meeting at Balasore. This meeting was attended by more than a thousand women. In her speech as the chairman of the reception committee Janhavi Devi refuted the universally accepted view of women's inability to stand on their own.[67]

The training of lady volunteers at Puri in November-December 1931by the Hindustani Sevadal for the A.I.C.C. session, scheduled to be held at Puri, was of special significance from the standpoint of women's participation in the nationalist movement. As a result of this training an appreciable number of women received useful orientation in such subjects as national language (Hindi), drill, exercise in sword and lathi, patrolling, physical hygiene, nationalist movement, Congress ideology, Orissan history and most of them took part in the resumed Civil Disobedience movement of 1932. Such training of the lady workers, organized in a systematic manner by the Hindusthani Sevadal had been first started in the Cuttack Town by Malati Devi. Annapurna Maharana who herself received

this training as a volunteer at Puri is now able to recollect the names of forty lady volunteers after the laps of fifty eight years.[68]

In comparison to the movement of 1930, the number of active female participants in the movement of 1932 was much larger. By 24 November 1932, in the Balasore district 129 women civil resisters were imprisoned.[69] Many of them belonged to the villages. In the movement of 1930 about ten women of the Cuttack town had actively participated, whereas the number of active female participants of the town in the movement of 1932 was about forty, out of whom twenty eight were sentenced to imprisonment.[70] In the Cuttack town, the woman workers were employed for distributing leaflets and bulletins during the movement of 1932.[71] On 26 January 1932 Rama Devi and her son Manmohan were arrested in the Chaudhury bazaar of Cuttack town while reading the independence declaration.[72] The same day two other leading woman workers – Janhavi Devi and Kiranbala Sen were arrested at Cuttack[73] and at Sakshigopal Nilamani and Shradhamani were arrested for reading independence declaration.[74] On 24 January 1932 Radhamani Devi, the wife of Pandit Nilakantha Das was arrested[75]. On 27 January 1932, Sunamani Devi was arrested at Puri.[76] On 4 February Subhadra Devi was arrested.[77] In June 1932 Sunamani Devi and Shobha Devi were arrested while addressing a meeting in front of the lion's gate of the Jagannath temple at Puri.[78] The following leading ladies also took part in the movement of 1932 – Sarala Devi, Malati Devi, Haramani Devi, Mangala Devi, Gouri Devi, Susila Devi, Basanti Devi, Sumati Devi, Durgamani Devi and Ashalata Devi*. The woman workers were generally sentenced to imprisonment for the short term of a month or two.

Towards the end of 1932, Harijan movement began. Rama Devi had the honour of being the first joint secretary of Orissa branch

of Harijan Sevak Sangha. Rama Devi and her woman co-workers, such as Kokila Devi, Susila Devi, Godavari Devi, Tulasi Devi, Manika Devi, Chandramani Devi, Annapurna Chaudhury , Sobharani Panda, Ansumali Ray, Amiya Ghose, Malati Chaudhury, Purabai and Nathibai took up anti-untouchability work. In the Cuttack town, Malati Chaudhury, Binapani Devi and Kiranbala Sen took lead in rendering services to the untouchables. The woman workers went to the scavengers' colonies and rendered such services as teaching their boys, giving them medicines, cleaning the colony, bathing their children, persuading them not to take wine and beef and reading out scriptures like *Ramayana*. These woman workers took as much interest in the Harijan uplift as they had previously exhibited in the salt *Satyagraha* and picketting. While carrying on this anti-untouchability work Rama Devi became convinced that women as mothers had great roles to play in the society, and that awakening of the country was impossible without the awakening of its maternal force.[79] In Gandhi's Harijan *Padayatra* (foot march), which began at Puri on 9 May 1934 the following woman workers participated – Rama Devi, Malati Chaudhury, Susila Devi, Godavari Devi, Sobharani Panda, Tulasi Devi, Mangala Sen, Ansumali Roy, Sunamani Devi, Annapurna Chaudhury, Manika Devi and Purabai. Gandhi was immensely pleased with their sincerity and commended them in the following words :

> I have marvelled at the manner in which Smt. Rama Devi and her girls have discharged themselves during the tour which however pleasant and easy it was had undoubtedly its trials. But these ladies have not known what fatigue is. There was a naturalness about all they did which went to show that they had been trained to bear hardships and live simply. As soon as the party reached its destination, these ladies allowed themselves no rest. They immediately went out among the Harijans fearlessly and with the greatest freedom. I have had the privilege of mixing with tens and thousands of India's women. I have seen them at work. But

> nowhere have I seen anything quite like what Smt. Rama Devi and her little band have been found to do so gracefully and so naturally. They have never needed or claimed any special privilege.[80]

After the Civil Disobedience movement, a number of woman workers took up constructive work in the villages, following Mahatma Gandhi's line of action. According to Annapurna Maharana, about twenty woman workers worked in various rural areas of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts. Rama Devi took up the work of rural reconstruction with her husband at Bari. Six other ladies – Godavari Devi (Kalyanpur), Sushila Devi (Rampur), Tulasi Devi (Bhadrak), Mangala Sengupta, Annapurna Devi, Manika Devi and Shobha Panda (Ganjam) also joined hands with Rama Devi in the constructive work at Bari. They propagated and implemented such items of constructive programme as promotion of *Khadar*, service to the Harijans, spread of Hindi as the national language, women's uplift, Basic Education, prohibition, adult education, diary, apiculture, tanning and distribution of medicines. Being trained by them some village women took up spinning and tried to implement other items of the constructive programme.[81] Malati Chaudhury took up constructive work at Angul. In such villages as Rampur, Bagalpur, Ganeswarpur and Ratnagiri (in Cuttack district), Sarangajodi (Puri district), Kumbharia (Balasore district) and Subarnapur and Jatra (Ganjam district) the lady social workers persuaded the untouchable parents to sent their daughters to the schools.[82]

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930's undoubtedly brought about an unprecedented awakening among the women of Orissa as elsewhere in India. "The eternal problems of female education and emancipation that has been baffling social workers" seemed "to have solved themselves"[83]. The participation of women in the movement of 1930's in an appreciable number was itself an

index of awakening among them. Some ladies such as Rama Devvi, Malati Chaudhury, Sunamani Devi, Janhavi Devi, Kokila Devi, Subhadra Devi and Kiranbala Sen made praiseworthy efforts to mobilize women in the nationalist movement as well as bring about awakening among them. By their exertions they elevated the position and role of women in the public life. These women belonged to the Congress-oriented families. Rama Devi, Malati Chaudhury and Kiranbala Sen mostly worked among women in the Cuttack district. Sarala Devi worked among the women in the Cuttack and Ganjam districts. Sunamani Devi worked among the women in the Puri district. Janhavi Devi, Kokila Devi and Subhadra Devi worked among the women in the Balasore district.

The woman workers generally belonged to the caste Hindu middle class families. Out of forty five woman civil resisters who were in Cuttack jail in 1932 sixteen belonged to the Karana Caste, seven to the Khandayat caste, seven to the Brahmin caste, ten to other castes (which included one Harijan woman named Haramani Behera)* and five to Bengali families.[84]

Except Malati Chaudhury probably none of the lady workers was highly educated, but some of them became sufficiently cultured through self study at home. Rama Devi, Sarala Devi and Sarojini Chaudhury were well-read. Sarala Devi was a talented writer. Kokila Devi was a poetess like her well-known brother Kantakabi Laxmikanta Mahapatra. The woman prisoners were given instruction inside the jail by their educated sisters.

The woman workers actively participated in the following items of the Civil Disobedience movement – distribution of leaflets and bulletins, processions, enrolment of Congress members, spread of *Khadar* and picketting of schools, college and liquor shops.

The awakening of women in 1930's, though unprecedented and spectacular, was confined to a microscopic section of women both in the urban and rural areas. So far as the rural areas were concerned, in some part of Jajpur sub-division of Cuttack district and Balasore district, an appreciable number of women participated in the movement of 1930's. In those rural areas where the woman activists like Rama Devi, Sunamani Devi, Malati Chaudhury and Subhadra Devi worked, they succeeded in involving some village women in the programme of nationalist movement.

The participation of women in the nationalist movement does not seem to have made significant contribution to the removal of such social abuses as child marriage, dowry system and forced widowhood, of which the women were the victims. Some widows like Sunamani Devi, Sushila Devi, Sarojini Chaudhury, Binapani Devi, Kiranbala Sen, Kokila Devi and Purabai (a Gujarati constructive worker), who would have otherwise lived meaningless and purposeless lives found purposefulness by participation in the nationalist movement. Two widows – Annapurna Sahu and Manika Devi, who were associated with the nationalist movement married for the second time.

Although woman leaders like Rama Devi, Malati Chaudhury and Sarala Devi showed considerable initiative and drive in organizing salt *Satyagraha* and picketting of their own accord and some women voluntarily came forward to join the movement inspite of opposition from the families, on the whole the women's role in the nationalist movement was subservient to that of men and sexually complimentary. Such a subservient and sex-complementary role for women was inevitable because of the male dominance, educational and cultural backwardness of women and social stigma attached to the women, taking part in public activities. According to the eye

witness account, the number of women, taking part in the Kathajudi rive bed meetings which were well-attended was always inconsiderable.

At any rate the movement of 1930's marked the beginning of active involvement of women in the public life of Orissa. Out of this movement three woman leaders came to lime light – Rama Devi, Sarala Devi and Malati Chaudhury. Rama Devi proved her mettle as a dedicated social worker. Sarala Devi entered into electoral politics and got elected to the first Legislative Assembly of Orissa under the Government of India Act of 1935. Malati Chaudhury entered into the Congress Socialist movement with her husband and also worked for the uplift of tribals.

Notes and references :

* **Sarala Devi :** She was born in 1904 in an aristocratic Karana family of the Cuttack town. Her family was related to Utkal Gaurab Madhusudan Das, the father of Oriya nationalism, and the pioneer of the national consciousness in Orissa. She read upto Middle English standard in the Ravenshaw Girls' School, Cuttack. At the age of fourteen she was married to Bhagirathi Mahapatra, a young lawyer of Cuttack. Bhagirathi Mahapatra became the first secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee, when it was formed in 1921. Sarala Devi took active part in the Non-cooperation as well as Civil Disobedience movements. She was a member of the Orissa provincial Legislature from 1937 to 1944. Besides her activities in the field of politics, she made her mark as a writer in Oriya language.

1. H.K. Mahtab, *Dashavarshara Odisa,* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1977, pp.92-3.

2. In his booklet *Constructive Programme : Its Meaning and Place* (Ahmedabad, 1941), M.K. Gandhi observed "........Satyagraha has automatically brought India's women out from their darkness, as nothing else could have done in such an ....incredibly short span of time .. In a plan of life, based on non-violence women has as much right to shape here destiny as man has to shape his" (pp.21-22).

3. Rama Devi Chaudhury, *Jivana Pathe* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1984, p.53.

* **Sarojini Chaudhury** : She is the daughter of famous Oriya novelist, Fakir Mohan Senapati. She was married to Gagan Bihari Chaudhury, a Munsif. Though she had little formal education, she was well-read. By 1930 she had become a widow.

* **Hiranmayi Senapati** – She was the wife of Prof. Mohini Mohan Senapati, the son of Fakir Mohan Senapati

* **Rama Devi (1899-1985)** : She was born in an aristocratic Karana family of Cuttack. Her father Gopal Ballabha Das who happened to be the younger brother of Madhusudan Das was a Deputy Magistrate under the Government of Bihar and Orissa. She had no formal schooling. She was educated at home by the private tutors. Nevertheless she was well read. At the age of fourteen she was married to Gopabandhu Chaudhury who joined government service in 1917 as a Deputy Magistrate after getting his M.A. degree from the Calcutta University. In 1921 Gopabandhu Chaudhury resigned from Government Service to devote himself to the nationalist movement. Rama Devi also had already developed attachment to public life because of her intimate association with here paternal uncle Madhusudan Das and impact of Swadeshi movement in Bengal. She had started spinning at Madhusudan's inspiration even

before joining the Congress movement. Like her husband who was a top Congress leader of Orissa, she actively participated in the nationalist movement. After independence she and her husband joined the Sarvoday movement. She was basically a constructive worker. She was conferred the Bajaj award for her social work.

4. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

5. *Ibid*, p-70 and interview with Annapurna Maharana

6. *Utkal Dipika*, 17 May, 1924.

7. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p.64

8. *Ibid*

9. *Utkal Dipika*, 12 July 1924.

10. *Utkal Dipika*, 26 July 1924, In a letter, written to M.K. Gandhi in 1921 Sarala Devi observed that the ill-treatment of women was as wide spread a social malady as the practice of untouchability. She alleged that about ninety percent of the nationalist minded young men maintained an attitude of lustful bestiality towards women. [See *Gandhi Rachanavali* (Oriya), Vol.16, Cuttack, 1980, p.29]

***Sunamani Hota :** She was born in a conservative Brahmin family in the Bishwanathpur village of the Puri district. She was married at an early age to the younger brother of Krupasindhu Hota, a prominent Congressman of Orissa. She became a widow at the age of fourteen. She received training in the Bidhaba Ashram (Widow's Home) at Puri. She spent some months in Mahatma Gandhi's Sabaramati Ashram before the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Gandhi appreciated her cleanliness and punctuality. She took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 and 1932, Harijan movement of 1934 and Quit India Movement of 1942. After independence she joined the Sarvoday movement.

11. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

12. Ibid

13. S.C. Das, *Pandit Gopabandhu : A Biography,* Cuttack, 1964, p-182

14. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.85

* **Janhavi Devi :** She was the daughter of Chaudhury Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra, a prominent nationalist of Bhadrak, district. Her father resigned from Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, protesting against the official repression during the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Kamalakanta Mahapatra, one of her brothers joined the nationalist movement after graduation. She was married to Mukunda Prasad Das, a nationalist lawyer of Balasore town (He afterwards became the first speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly). She formed an association at Balasore, called Nari Raksha Samati (Association for Women's Protection) for rehabilitating helpless girls. She took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Kokila Devi : She was the younger sister of Janhavi Devi. She became a widow a few years after her marriage. She was a poetess. She helped Janhavi Devi in organizing women's conference at Balasore in 1931. She took active part in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1932 and Harijan movement.

15. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.86.

16. *Ibid,* p.84

17. Ibid, p-86

18. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

* **Malati Devi :** She was born in 1904 in a Zamindar family of the Kamarkhada village, located near Dacca, the capital of Bangladesh. She belonged to a Vaidya family which had accepted Brahmo faith. Her father, Kumud Nath Sen was practising as a barrister at Patna. After passing her matriculation from the Calcutta University she studied in the Viswabharati University of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore for seven years. There she was taught by Tagore and the famous philanthropic Christian Missionary C.F. Andrews. At Viswabharati she came in contact with Nabakrushna Chaudhury who was also studying there. She later married Nabakrushna Chaudhury and with her husband fully dedicated herself to the nationalist movement. She took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement, Congress Socialist Movement, Praja Mandal Movement and Quit India Movement. She was elected to the Constituent Assembly of India. With her husband she joined the Sarvoday Movement. Like Rama Devi she was selected for the Bajaj Award in recognition of her work in the field of public life.

19. Mahtab, *op. cit.*, p.80

20. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p.84

21. *Utkal Dipika,* 19 April 1930

22. *Ibid*

***Kiranbala Sen :** She was born at Vikrampur, Bangladesh in a nationalist minded family. She was married to Durga Narayan Sengupta, the personal physician of the Maharaja of Kashmir. Her daughter Mangala was also an active social worker like herself. By the time of Salt Satyagraha she had become a widow.

23. *Utkal Dipika,* 26 April, 1930

24. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p.89

25. *Ibid*

* **Romola Devi (1893-1981) :** She was the wife of the Bengali lawyer, Kishori Mohan Joardar. She was a Brahmo by faith. She took keen interest in social works. With her husband she took part in the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930. In the meeting, held in the Kathjudi rive bed on 5 April 1930 to give send-off to the first batch of *Satyagrahis* she sang the following lines, composed by the Bengali poet Atul Prasad Sen :

> Sing, O Sing, to the accompaniment of hundreds of violins and flutes
>
> India will again shine out as the greatest country in the world.

In the same meeting her husband delivered a speech, recalling the glories of ancient India.

26. *Utkal Dipika,* 26 April , 1930

27. *Desha Katha,* 25 April, 1930

28. *Utkal Dipika,* 3 May, 1930

29. *Utkal Dipika,* 10 May, 1930

30. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* pp.89-91

31. *Samaja,* 14 May, 1930

32. *Utkal Prasanga* (Oriya), August 1988, Dandapani Behera, "Ganjam Zillzara Aina Amanya Andolan" (The Civil Disobedience Movement of Ganjam district).

33. *Utkal Dipika,* 7 June, 1930

34. Report of Satyagraha Movement in Utkal (January 1930-March 1931) from Nilamani Pradhan, Acting Secretary, U.P.C.C., A.I.C.C. Files (Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi).

35. Ibid

36. A consolidated report of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Utkal upto 25[th] September 1930 from Pranakrushna Padhiary, Acting Secretary, U.P.C.C., A.I.C.C. Files (Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi).

37. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, pp.92-7

38. *Utkal Dipika,* 16 August, 1930

39. Nilamani Pradhan's report to A.I.C.C.

40. Ibid

* **Binapani Devi :** She was the daughter of a Bengali lawyer of Cuttack town, named Banabihari Palit. She had little formal education. She had become a widow by the time of Salt Satyagraha.

41. Interview with Annapurna Maharana.

42. *Utkal Dipika,* 22 November, 1930

43. *Desha Katha,* 25 November, 1930

44. *Utkal Dipika,* 9 August, 1930

45. Mahatab H.K., *Sadhanar Pathe* (Oriya) Cuttack, 1972, p.133

46. *Utkal Dipika,* 13 December, 1930

47. *Utkal Dipika,* 21 March, 1931

48. *Utkal Dipika,* 21 March, 1931

49. *Utkal Dipika,* 28 March, 1931

50. *Ibid*

51. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p.101

52. *Utkal Dipika,* 9 May 1931

53. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p.94

54. *Ibid*

55. Mahtab, *Dasha Varshara Odisa,* p.87

56. Pranakrushna Padhiary's Report

57. Nilamani Pradhan's Report.

58. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.102.

***Annapurna Maharana :** She was born to Gopabandhu Chaudhury and Rama Devi, two dedicated nationalists of Orissa in 1917. She had no formal schooling, as her parents did not send her to any Government school because of their commitment to the nationalist movement. She took part in the activities of Banar Sena (Children's Volunteer Corps) during the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930. She was jailed in 1932 and 1942. She took part in the Harijan movement as well as the rural reconstruction work after 1934. She was married to Sharat Chandra Maharana. She as well as her husband joined the Sarvoday movement after independence.

59. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

60. Annapurna Maharana, "Amruta Anubhava" in *Utkal Prasanga,* August 1986 and Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.102

61. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.102

***Subhadra Mahtab.** She is the wife of Harekrushna Mahtab, the prominent Congress leader of Orissa. She took active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement. She worked for the promotion of *Khadar* among women as well as enrollment of women in the Congress.

62. Mahtab, *Sadhanar Pathe,* p.158

63. *Ibid*

64. *Utkal Dipika,* 28 March 1931

65. *Utkal Dipika,* 4 April, 1931

66. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.94

67. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

68. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

69. *Utkal Dipika,* 17 December, 1932

70. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

71. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.101

72. *Ibid,* p.103

73. *Ibid*

74. *Utkal Dipika,* 30 January, 1932

75. *Ibid*

76. *Utkal Dipika,* 6 February, 1932

77. *Utkal Dipika,* 27 February, 1932

78. *Utkal Dipika,* 18 June, 1932

* **Ashalata Devi :** She was born and educated at Calcutta. She was married to Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya, a Bengali doctor, who took active part in the nationalist movement in Orissa.

79. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* pp.105-7

80. *Harijan,* 15 June 1934

81. Chaudhury, *op. cit.,* p.118

82. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

83. Pranakrushna Padhiary's Report

*__Haramani Behera__ : She was an illiterate fisher woman of Kendrapada. She took part in the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and 1932. She was jailed in 1932.

84. Interview with Annapurna Maharana

XIII

HARIJAN MOVEMENT IN ORISSA (1932-34)

Though because of Gandhi's initiative, the Indian National COngress had adopted the removal of untouchability as an important item in the Congress party's programme of struggle for the liberation of the country, yet it was his fast in September 1932 in protest against the provision of separate electorates for the Depressed classes in the British Prime Minister's Communal Award, which roused the countrywide enthusiasm in an unprecedented scale for the removal of practice of untouchability. Orissa was no exception in this regard. The following passage from the *Utkal Dipika*, the noted weekly of Orissa would indicate to what extent the public mind of Orissa had been agitated by Gandhi's fast:

> Gandhi's vow to fast turned the Cuttack people mad. All people, children to oldmen. became anxious. Everybody was mentally perplexed. It was everybody's prayer that Gandhi must be saved; that Hindu community and Indian nation must remain intact. The Cuttack people have fully discharged their duty in this regard. They have removed the long standing grievance of the untouchables by allowing all people to enter the temples irrespective of distinctions of caste. There will not be any more the distinction of touchable and untouchable. Man will not hate man on the ground of caste. It is everybody's resolve that as all are the children of God, there should be no distinction on the basis of caste. All are determined to work out this vow.[1]

On hearing of Gandhi's vow, on 17 September 1932, prominent caste Hindu leaders met in the Cuttack residence of Babu Bichitrananda Das, and formed a committee to plan the programme of action. Under the auspices of this committee a largely attended meeting was held in the premises of the Cuttack town hall on 18

September 1932. In this meeting Pandit Basudeb Kavyatirtha, a Brahmin scholar, embraced a scavenger and delivered an appealling speech. The next day, another meeting was held in the town hall where people prayed for the life of Gandhi. On 20 September, the people of Cuttack city observed a *hartal.* On that day, people took bath in the Mahanadi, prayed to God, and observed fast. In the evening there was a procession of caste Hindus as well as low caste people which also included many women.[2]

The processionists saw the deity in the Vinod Vihari temple, and went round the city, and, at the end of procession, held a large meeting in the premises of the town hall in spite of continuous rains. In the meeting they prayed to God for Gandhi's life as well as national unity of India.

The tempo of the anti-untouchability movement, initiated by Gandhi's fast, continued for some time even after the conclusion of the Poona pact. In true Gandhian spirit the *Utkal Dipika* observed: "The object of Mahatmaji's fast is not political, but social, religious and spiritual. If we are to reform Hindu -society in a new fashion, we have to change our attitude towards the untouchables. Mere representation of the untouchables in the legislatures and councils would not solve the problem of untouchability. Every Hindu has a duty' to remove untouchability."[3]

Throughout the last week of September 1932, every day, in the Cuttack town processions and *samkirtans* were organised in which even the touchable and untouchable women took part on equal footing. In the meetings held on the municipality ground, such untouchable castes. as Hadis and Pans sat in the midst of the caste Hindu gentlemen. It seemed as if the entire Hindu populace of the town was determined to exorcise the practice of untouchability.'[4]

This mass enthusiasm for the removal of untouchability, though markedly noticed in the Cuttack town, the head quarters of the province, spread to its various parts rural and urban. As in the case of other parts of the country, the anti untouchability movement: for sometime, eclipsed the Civil Disobedience Movement. Consequently, the leading Civil Disobedience leader of Orissa, Gopabandhu Chaudhury suspended all his political activities, and devoted himself whole-heartedly to the cause of the removal of untouchability.[5] His worthy wife, Ramadevi, also sincerely devoted herself to organising anti-untouchability work among women.[6] In various principal towns the anti-untouchability movement was conducted by the local leaders. In Bhadrak, the movement was carried on by Bhagabat Prasad Samantaray Mahapatra. In Balasore, Mukunda Prasad Das guided the movement. In Puri Pandit. Nilakantha Das and the local lawyer, Lokanath Mhhra, assumed the leadership of the movement.'[7] In Jajpur, Jagannath Das, Fanidra Nath Samal and Narayan Chandra Ghosh moved throughout the villages, and took up the task of cleaning the Harijan-inhabited places as well as taking steps for the spread of education among the untouchable classes.[8] A meeting, held at Jajpur under the auspices of the local anti-untouchability league, passed a resolution, making an appeal to the Zamorin of Calicut to declare the Guruvayer temple open for the untouchables.[9] The question of opening of the Guruvayur temple to the untouchables had at that time assumed all-India importance because of the *satyagraha* which was being carried on there by the untouchables under the leadership of Kelappan and also because of the interest taken by Gandhi.

At this stage Sj Jivaram Kalyanji, the Gujarati social worker, started doing *Khadi* work among the Harijans. Being a devoted social worker, Kalyanji worked among the leper untouchables, and

himself contracted the dreadful disease, but even in the grip of the disease he continued his social work among the untouchables.[10]

By the beginning of November 1932, an anti-untouchablity committee, consisting of 28 representatives from the different districts, was formed at Cuttack under the chairmanship of Kabiraj Balukeshwar Acharya[11] .This committee formed the nucleus of the Orissa branch of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangha formed under the presidency of G D. Birls. On 20 November 1932, A. V. Jhakkar, the General secretary of lite All-India Harijan Sevak Sangha, came to Cuttack, and addressed a meeting, held in the Cuttack town hall under the presidency of Gopabandhu Chaudhury. In his address Thakkar stressed the necessity of spread of education among the untouchables so as to make them conscious of their rights. He promised special aid from the central fund of the Harijan Sevak Sangha for that purpose in view of the poverty of Orissa. He deplored the negligence, shown by the Cuttack Municipality towards the problems of the untouchable inhabitants of the Rajabagicha area[12].

According to the constitution of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangha, the Utkal board of the Sangha took up the following tasks: opening of the separate schools and hostels for the untouchables, award of scholarships and stipends, securing to them the right to enter the public Hindu temples, digging wells and securing to them access for the common wells, providing employment, sanitation in the Harijan Basties etc. Under the inspiration of the Gandhian movement, it was found that in January and February 1933, in the whole of Orissa proper considerable number of students had been admitted to the schools. The table below will give the exact information.[13]:

Primary School	1197
M. E. School	53
High School	47

Among a number of hostels opened for the Harijans, the most noted was the Kaibalya Kutir of Cuttack. This hostel, maintained by the Utkal board of the Harijan Sevak Sangha, had ten Harijan students, reading in the High Schools, as its inmates by March 1934.[14]

So far as the entry of the untouchables into the temples was concerned, the task was rendered difficult by the reaction which started very soon after the commencement of the Harijan movement. In a meeting, held in the Cuttack town hall on 18 December 1932 under the auspices of the Harijan Sevak Sangha, which was attended by Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Satyanarayan Sengupta, Radhanath Rath, Rajkrushna Bose, and Atal Bihari Acharya, the conservative leader, Pancha Jyotirbit Kavyatirtha Shastri Saraswati Parikshit Dash Sharma, the Secretary of Utkal Sanatan Dharma Sabha, pronounced the following verdict on the Harijan movement in the face of thunderous opposition from the audience: "By removal of untouchability and entry of *untouchables* into the temples, you are going to destroy the Sanatan religion."[15] In a meeting of the conservatives, held under the auspices of the Utkal Sanatana Dharma Sabha on 23 December 1932, in the premises of Gopalji temple, Cuttack, the anti-untouchability leader, Radhanath Rath and his followers, had verbal tussle with the conservatives. It was reported

that in this meeting the young Congress workers laughed at the conservatives and obstructed the proceedings of their meeting [16].

Of all the temples, the question of entry into the Jagannath temple assumed special importance in view of the antiquity and the eminence of the temple. But on this question, strong opposition was encountered from the conservatives. On 8 January, 1933, at 5.30 P.M. the Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha was to hold a meeting in front of the Singhadwar, of the Jagannath temple to oppose the move for the untouchables' entry into it. The anti-untouchability workers also planned to hold a meeting there at the same time. Consequently, a tussle between the two antagonistic groups seemed inevitable. But this untoward situation was avoided by the clamping of section 144 by the police[17]. A committee was formed at Puri with Pandit Nilakantah Dash as the President and Lokanath Mishra as the Secretary to carry on the temple entry movement in the town[18]. Discussions were started with the Raja of Puri, and the Mahant of Emar Math for abolishing the disability of the untouchables in this matter.[19] Jivaram Kalyanji also began working among the intelligentsia and the priestly class at Puri to create an atmosphere for the abolition of untouchability in that holy city and to get the gates of the famous temple opened to the untouchables.[20] Efforts were made to reform the Mukti Mandap of the Jagannath temple so as to bring into it real scholars who would give a favourable verdict in favour of the untouchables' entry into the temple.[21] Pandit Nilakantha Dash and Raghunath Mishra pointed out that a short while ago the temple of Jagannath was open to the untouchables from all parts of India.[22] The *Utkal Dipika* also pointed out that many untouchables from outside the state were entering the temple without any restriction, but strangely enough the local untouchables had no access to it[23]. According to Jivaram Kalyanji, thirteen priests

of the temple showed their old registers which indicated that in past they had taken the untouchables inside the temple,[24]

But the Raja of Puri and some Mohants strongly opposed the idea of allowing the untouchables' entry into the temple.[25] Some Mahants sent a memorial to the Viceroy condemning the temple entry agitation.[26] On 8 June 1933, a meeting of 500 Brahmin scholars, held under the auspices of Sir Hariram Goyenka in the Goyenka Dharmashala passed the following resolutions:

"(1) This meeting appeals to the youth of the country that as they have no knowledge of religion, ·they should not interfere in any religious matter.' (2) Except the *Mahaprasad* of Lord Jagannath, the untouchables are to be completely dissociated from all other matters of the temple."[27]

Not only the conservatives but also the intelligentsia of Puri refused to co-operate with the temple entry movement out of fear, because at that time the Government regarded the Harijan movement of Gandhi as a part of the Civil Disobedience movement.[28] Afraid of incurring the displeasure of the police, the lawyers who thought that their interest in the Harijans might be mistaken as interest in politics refused to subscribe to the *Harijan* weekly,[29]

Consequently, the temple of Lord Jagannath whose opening would have given impetus to the anti-untouchability movement all over the country remained formally closed. Even Gandhi's visit to Puri during the subsequent Harijan tour did not result in the opening of the temple. Asked by a representative of the Associated Press of India at Kendrapada on 29 May 1934 whether he would give any lead regarding the entry of untouchables into the Puri Jagannath temple, Gandhi replied:

"I have known of the importance of the temple at Puri being open to Harijans as it certainly was years ago, and as I know from first hand evidence, always has been so long as Harijans have gone without asserting their rights. But I have no lead to give about opening the temple beyond this that public opinion should be cultivated in that behalf."[30]

While the Jagannath temple officially remained closed to the untouchables, by March 1934, three temples had been declared open for the untouchables-Raghunathji temple at Berhampur Khirichora Gopinath temple at Remuna, Balasore[31], and the Shiva temple of Kujanga[32]. By that time the Harijan Sevak Sangha had also opened 26 schools for the untouchables[33]:

Balasore district	-	4
Sambalpur district	-	1
Ganjam district	-	7
Puri district	-	3
Cuttack district	-	11
Total	-	26

Gandhiji's Harijan tour in Orissa in May and June 1934 gave great impetus to the anti-untouchability movement in the state. His *padayatra* or foot march through the villages aroused intense enthusiasm for the Harijan cause'[34]. Gandhi reached Puri by train on 8 May 1934. By that time a rumour had spread among the conservative Hindus that be would try a forced entry of the untouchables inside the temple of Jagannath. Consequently, troubles were anticipated and a large number of police men had been posted

at the railway station at the time of his arrival at the suggestion of Pandit Nilakantha Das, the President of U.P.C.C. On learning about this arrangement, Gandhi's face turned red in anger and shame for two reasons; first, he did not require police help for his cause which he regarded as a spiritual cause; secondly, he considered the conservatives' apprehension absolutely unfounded, because he never sought forced entry of the untouchables into the temple, i. e. to promote religious cause by means of violence[35]. To emphasise the spiritual nature of his Harijan tour, in a Press statement[36] as well as in a public meeting[37] at Puri on 8 May 1934, he announced his decision to complete the rest of his tour in Orissa on foot. 'If my message comes from the heart, he said, "it will travel faster on foot than by rail or motor'[38]. According to Gandhi's suggestion, the foot march was planned by A. V. Thakkar, and commenced from Puri on 9 May 1934[39].

Though Gandhi's foot march roused much enthusiasm among the common masses and particularly educated sections of the untouchables, it roused at the same time bitter opposition from the conservatives. Opposition meetings were organised by the Raja of Puri and the Mahant of Emar Math and others at which Gandhi was openly denounced as an imposter, and a cheat, and his Harijan movement as an outrage on Hindu religion and the public was moved to boycott him completely.[40] On 9 May 1934, during his march to Harekrushnapur, the Brahmin village. the Sanatanatists staged black flag demonstration.[41] At Cuttack, on 16 May 1934, the conservative leader, Lalnath who was organising the black flag demonstrations against Gandhi was allowed by the latter to address the audience who had gathered to listen to Gandhi.[42]

Nevertheless, Gandhi was impressed by the tremendous response from the masses. On 14 May 1934, he wrote: "By train

and car I would have covered probably 750 miles and would have nominally seen 150,000 people at least. On foot I have covered not more that 40 miles, the sixth day being my silence day, and come in touch with not less than 20,000 men and women. My innermost feeling is that the work done is in inverse ratio to that between the artificial locomotion and the natural. The contact during the past five days has been more real between villagers and myself.[43]

Such was the spontaneous response from the masses to Gandhi's *Padayatra* that everywhere people in large number joined him, and raised the full-throated Oriya national cry '*Hari bolo*',[44] at Kendrapada the Muslims joined the *Padayatra* and raised the chorus 'Allahu Akbar' under the leadership of Dr. Vahidullah[45]. The Harijans also welcomed him by showering flowers and blowing the conch shcell[46].

The walking tour of Gandhi from Puri to Bhadrak took 26 days (from 9 May to 8 June 1934, excluding a period of 4 days from 17 May to 20 May 1934 when he was pre-occupied with the A1.C.C. meeting at Patna).

Gandhi found his Padayatra deeply meaningful. It revealed to him the tremendous necessity for social work in the villages. He said at Bhadrak on 7 June 1934: "Those who took a direct part in the pilgrimage cannot but have been struck by the fact that real work lies in the villages. The vast mass of Harijana live there. Untouchability has its strongest roots there. Poverty, too, is most rampant in the villages. Therefore the Sangha, while not neglecting the cities should send its best workers to the villages and there do twofold work-serve the Harijans and the Savarnas – the former, by procuring for the young and the old educational facilities, clean water supply, admission to temples, betterment of economic condition,

removal of bad habits, e.g. carrion-eating, eating and drinking intoxicating drugs and drinks, and inducing hygeinic habits, and the latter, by establishing friendly contact with them and securing their co-operation to the extent they would be prepared to give it."[47].

So far as Orissa was concerned, Gandhis' *Padayatra* the gave a tremendous push to the anti-untouchability work. Everywhere, in the public meetings held during the walking tour, the caste Hindus and Harijans mixed freely on equal terms. An advance party of volunteers which mostly consisted of the female workers from Ramadevi's Ashram at Cuttack did sanitation work in the Harijan basties during the tour.[48] Gandhi was impressed to see the great capacity for endurance exhibited by the Utkal co-workers,[49] he was particularly full of praise for the dedicated spirit of Ramadevi[50] An important outcome of the Harijan tour was the establishment of an Ashram by Gopabandhu Choudhury and Ramadevi at Bari, a place in the Cuttack district, 30 miles away from the Jajpur Road station, for doing constructive work in the villages[51]. So far as the untouchables were concerned, the Harijan movement and the subsequent tour of Gandhi, roused much consciousness among them. By 1935, the Kandras, a leading untouchable caste, had become fairly advanced and conscious of their rights, and the Harijan Sevak Sangha was concentrating on the development of such backward untouchable castes as the Pans, Doms and Haris[52]. In the same year, N. R. Malkani very hopefully deserved: 'I consider the problem of untouchability in Orissa as soluble within measurable time,[53].

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2. *Ibid*
3. *Utkal Dlpika*, 1 Oct. 1932
4. *Ibid*
5. *Utkal Dipika*, 5 November 1932
6. *Ibid*
7. Ibid
8. *Utkal Dipika*, 10 December 1932
9. *Ibid*

* Jivaram Kalyanji had placed his life's saving of rupees one lakh at Gandhi's disposal in 1922 for the service of the nation and was doing *khadi* work in Orissa.

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About the Book

This volume is a collection of articles on the different facets of the saga of freedom struggle in Orissa from the inception of colonial rule up to independence. The author has skilfully brought into focus the dynamics of freedom struggle in relation to different localities, and sections of the population in Orissa, without being biased in any manner. It is meant for scholars as well as general readers.



Professor Atul Chandra Pradhan (b.1945) is a bright alumnus of the Utkal University. He retired as Professor and Head of the post graduate department of History in the same University in 2005. He has published many books and articles on Modern Indian and Orissan history. His published books include *The Emergence of the Depressed Classes* (Bhubaneswar, 1986), *A Study of History of Orissa* (Bhubaneswar, 1985) and *The Nationalist Movement in a Regional Setting: the Rise of Congress to Power in Orissa (1920-34)* (New Delhi, 1992). Recently he has acted as a co-editor of *Freedom Struggle in Orissa*, 2 volumes and *Bhasa Bhittika Swatantra Odisha Gathan*, 2 volumes, published by the Department of Culture, Government of Orissa.

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